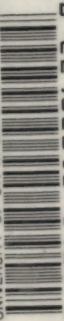


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A CONSIDERATION FOR PRIESTS

BY

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POPE PIUS X.
EXHORTS TO
DAILY COMMUNION

IN a Decree published on June 3, 1905, the Holy Father manifests his "great desire that Daily Communion, so salutary and so agreeable to God, may be, by the Grace of God, propagated everywhere amongst the Christian people;" and for this purpose grants an Indulgence of three hundred days for the daily recital of the following prayer, with a Plenary Indulgence once a month for all who are faithful to the daily recital:

PRAYER

"O Most Sweet Jesus! Who didst come into the world to impart to all souls the life of Thy grace; and Who, to preserve and foster it in them, hast willed to become the Daily Food of their daily infirmity, we humbly beseech Thee, through Thy Sacred Heart burning with love for us, to pour out Thy Divine Spirit upon all souls, in order that those who, unhappily, are in mortal sin may be converted to Thee, and recover the life of grace which they have lost; and that those who by Thy help are already living this Divine life may, when it is possible for them, devoutly approach Thy Holy Table every day; so that, daily receiving in Holy Communion the antidote of their daily venial sins, and daily nourishing in themselves the life of Thy grace, thus ever purifying themselves more and more—they may, at last, arrive at the possession of the life of Eternal Happiness. Amen."

Imprimatur:

GULIELMUS, *Archiepiscopus Dublinensis.*

PREFACE

THESE slender pages are respectfully offered by the author to his brother-workers in the vineyard of Our Lord, to the dispensers of the mysteries of God, in the prayerful hope that they may prove of some assistance to them in extending to all the faithful under their care the inestimable privilege, which they themselves enjoy, of daily receiving the "daily Bread."

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J.

MOUNT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,
NEAR CHESTERFIELD,
Feast of St. Stanislaus Kostka
November 13, 1907.

THE MINISTRY OF DAILY COMMUNION

INTRODUCTION

AN HISTORICAL SUMMARY*

THE whole Catholic world owes an everlasting debt of gratitude to our Holy Father, Pope Pius X., for having in fearless and unequivocal terms given the *coup de grâce* to a long and at times somewhat heated domestic controversy—namely, as to the rights and wrongs of frequent and daily Communion among the laity. Of course, that which forms the very essence of this great benefit is the opening out to all, without distinction, the inexhaustible treasures of grace and holiness contained within the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. And if thanks be due from the laity,

* Made largely, with kind permission, from the Spanish work "La Communion Frecuente y Diaria," by Father J. B. Ferreres, S.J., Professor and Examiner in Moral Theology and Canon Law.

special gratitude is not less owing to the Vicar of Christ from those charged with the ministry of dispensing these great riches to others.

As Father Juan Ferreres points out in his learned and painstaking commentary upon the Eucharistic Decrees, with which these humbler pages are mainly concerned, two altogether conflicting opinions had sharply defined themselves in the Church among the orthodox as to the dispositions needed for a very frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist, each championed by saints, doctors, and spiritual guides of repute.

The present writer sees no more useful plan than to give here, with incidental observations, the summary of the history of these opposite views as traced by Ferreres. This study will throw considerable light upon that part of the doctrinal and disciplinary Decree "*Sacra Tridentina Synodus*" of December 20, 1905, where it reminds us that there were never wanting in the Church "men of learning and piety," who upheld the sounder view of Eucharistic practice which has recently been sealed with the authority of the Holy See.

THE FIRST OPINION.

That in theory the Church wished that the faithful should communicate frequently, and even daily, as far as their duties permitted; but that in applying this standard to individuals distinction had to be made between soul and soul, according to the greater or lesser perfection of preparation and of holiness in daily life.

The words of **S. Thomas Aquinas*** may be taken as representing this now discarded view :

“ Is it lawful to communicate every day ? . . . I answer that as regards the use of this Sacrament, two things may be considered: the one on the side of the Sacrament itself, the virtue of which is salutary to men, and hence it is profitable to partake of it daily in order that man may daily receive its fruits; . . . the other, on the side of the receiver, of whom it is required that he approach it with great devotion and reverence. And therefore, if a man find himself thus disposed every day, let him receive it every day. . . . But since for the most part it happens with the greater number that many obstacles occur through lack of disposition either of body or of soul, it is not profitable for all that they should receive this Sacrament daily, but only as often as a person finds himself prepared.”

Most will probably join with Ferreres in concluding that the doctor is not merely postulating that measure of preparation now declared to be sufficient for even daily Communion—*i.e.*, “the state of grace and a right intention” (Art. I.)—but a yet higher degree of preparedness, which he expresses by the phrase “great devotion and reverence.” Else the question discussed by him would lie, not between communicating daily and communicating more seldom, but between communicating and not communicating at all.

S. Bonaventure similarly, after arguing in favour

* “Summa,” “De Eucharistia,” quæstio 80, a. 10.

of frequent Communion, adds the following limitation: "All the reasons that have been alleged . . . for frequency should be understood subject to the proviso of fitting preparation, which is to be found in very few (*paucissimi*)," whence it seems to follow that the Franciscan doctor would have advised "very few" to approach Communion frequently, still less with that highest degree of frequency called daily Communion.

Though the earnest promotion of more frequent Communion on the part of **S. Ignatius de Loyola** appeared almost revolutionary in an age when reception of the Eucharist—except at Easter—had fallen into almost universal abeyance among Christians, nevertheless, the saint's advocacy stopped short of actually exhorting "all the faithful, of whatever state or condition," to daily Communion, which is what Pius X. has done. As a rule, he would have had the laity, especially married persons, counselled to receive at most weekly, which, however, was a huge innovation for his day. When S. Francis de Borja, as Duke of Gandia, still leading a most devout life in the world, in spite of his engrossing occupations as Viceroy over a large province, was subjected to reproach, even from the pulpit, for communicating every week, S. Ignatius wrote to encourage him to persevere in spite of hostile criticism; but his exhortation went no further, possibly out of prudent regard for the unenlightened state of public opinion. Certainly in the founder's letter to the Biscayan villagers of Azpeitia, near his

ancestral castle, daily Communion is proposed as an ideal to be aimed at.

“ There was a time when all Christians who had reached a suitable age received the Holy Eucharist daily. Soon, the ardour of piety having gradually cooled, it was only received weekly. Then, after a long time, the fire of charity having everywhere greatly declined, the general custom was to communicate only at the three principal solemnities of the year. . . . Now at last, through our negligence or weakness, things are come to such a pass that persons only fortify themselves once a year with this Heavenly Food. . . . As the welfare of souls and the honour and worship of God are so closely connected with this adorable Sacrament, it is right that it should become the object of our most lively solicitude, and that *we should endeavour to revive the holy traditions of our forefathers amongst us.*”*

Blessed **John de Avila**, who led so many souls to exceptional holiness, granted daily Communion to few, and in other respects does not differ materially from the First Opinion. Suarez is of the same mind, as is also Cardinal de Lugo, whom S. Alphonsus held to be *facile princeps* among moral theologians after S. Thomas.

S. Francis de Sales, though his guidance of souls was distinguished by its mildness, required as conditions for *weekly* Communion that a person should not merely be free from mortal sin, but even from

* See Franciosi's "Spirit of S. Ignatius," Quarterly Series, pp. 343, 344.

affection to venial sin, and have besides a *strong desire* for the Sacrament. But for *daily* reception the saint further exacted that "he should, for the most part, have overcome all evil inclinations": whereas, according to the Papal Decree, it is precisely in frequent, and even daily, reception of the Eucharist that we shall find strength for obtaining this victory over ourselves.

S. Alphonsus Liguori, too, is in substantial agreement with the First Opinion, being thus in accord with Cardinal Lambertini (afterwards Benedict XIV.), in his treatise on "The Synod." Such is the manifest mind of this doctor of the Church, as set forth at length in his "Homo Apostolicus," from which Ferreres quotes abundantly. And yet S. Alphonsus himself would prescribe almost daily Communion to a sinner striving to break some vicious habit.

It is to be noticed, in view of so many great names ranged against the now authorized practice by all alike of daily Communion, that there was no dogmatic dispute concerning the nature of the Holy Eucharist in itself. There was, however, as to our moral conduct towards it. But, then, the First Opinion was not the practically unanimous teaching of the whole Church considered in all the centuries of its existence, nor, as we shall see, even at the time when many of these great authorities wrote. Perhaps this is not an altogether unimportant point, for the Decree of Pius X. is not *merely* disciplinary: it is also partly doctrinal, both where it shows forth so

clearly the predominantly *remedial* purpose of Our Lord's institution, and where it lays down rules for our conduct in the use of it.

Such, then, was one view as to the requirements for daily Communion. Nor was it the view of narrow-minded rigorists or of the unenlightened, but of wise and saintly men, who directed strenuous efforts towards maintaining souls in the use of the Sacraments. They all accepted the principle that daily Communion was in itself desirable—that is to say, considering the matter, like St. Thomas, from the point of view of that Sacrament's salutary effects. But none of them appear fully to have realized—what it is now our privilege to know from the teaching of Pius X.—that daily Communion is desirable for all, *without exception*, whatever their state and condition, temporal or spiritual, if only they are in the state of grace, and approach the Holy Table with a right intention.*

The greatness of the change in Eucharistic practice, now urged upon us as a universal system by our Supreme Spiritual Director, stands out in contrast, not merely to the preponderance of theological and ascetical opinion in past centuries

* An objector of some position complained at the Metz Eucharistic Congress, 1907, that he had heard much said about a "right" intention, but little or nothing about the other epithet mentioned in the Decree of 1905—viz., a "pious" one. As Art. II. of the Decree shows clearly by the examples it gives, the two things are synonymous in the mind of the Holy See.

and in our own time, but even to official directions issued by the Church herself. An instance of this may be found in the reply of the Sacred Congregation of the Council—the same authority that issued the late Decree to the Bishop of Brescia, on January 24, 1587. The Bishop had anxiously sought for advice in the following state of affairs. Many of his flock, of both sexes, persons much engrossed in worldly affairs, busy traders, and even married people, communicated every day. Nuns in convents often aspired to the same degree of frequency, which singularity, so pernicious in religious life, gave rise to contentions. In its reply, the Congregation says that his lordship should certainly see (*omnino provideat*) that no one was repelled from the Sacred Banquet, whether he approached frequently or daily. But it adds, though less imperatively, that the Bishop should strive (*operam det*) that “each one may taste the sweetness of the Lord’s Body in a worthy manner, more frequently or more rarely *according to the manner of each one’s preparation.*” The same tempering of daily Communion is visible in other parts of the reply.

Thus we have presented to us another instance of how the Church of God, being a living thing, is ever developing and perfecting herself, and attaining to a fuller realization of the treasures with which Our Lord has dowered her, and, in particular, of that wondrous legacy of love bequeathed to her by the Divine Bridegroom “on the night when He was betrayed.”

THE SECOND OPINION.

The second and conflicting view as to Daily Communion, also held by many in the past, may be thus stated : That no higher preparation is essentially needed for *daily* reception of the Eucharist than is required for a single reception—say, at Easter ; and that those holier conditions of soul, beyond the mere state of grace and a right intention, are not so much preparations for the Sacrament as its fruit and effect, one Communion thus qualifying us for deriving yet greater profit from the next one.

Under this conception, the Holy Eucharist becomes a spiritual medicine — the *Divinum pharmacum*, as the Decree says, for remedying all our deficiencies. Under the First Opinion it became primarily an object of honour and reverence, a privilege or “reward of virtue,” to be extended to souls in proportion as these had remedied their defects already ; and this, the Decree trenchantly tells us, Holy Communion is *not*. From this false view arose logically that arbitrary graduated scale of more perfect dispositions, to be seen even in standard text-books of our own day, with its allotment of so many Communion a week, to correspond with such and such a degree of virtue—a page of theology which Pius X. has deleted.*

* Among books published in 1907, however, our readers may have noticed one with a chapter—written, doubtless, before the Decree of 1905 appeared—in which this obsolete scale is accidentally, but unhappily, revived.

THE MINISTRY OF DAILY COMMUNION

If evidence were needed to show that the Second, and now authenticated, view is no novelty in the Church, it would be enough to recall a passage, quoted with approval by Rogacci, in his admirable little book on "Holy Confidence," from a spiritual conference of Cassian, Abbot of the Monastery of S. Victor, at Marseilles, who appears to have died before A.D. 450.

"If," writes Cassian, "the sight of our sins tends to keep us away from *daily* Communion, the confidence of finding in it a remedy for all our evils ought to make us hunger for it, profoundly convinced that, if we are unworthy of the favour, the help is essential for us; *otherwise, I do not see who would dare to communicate even once a year.* And there are some who keep away, and do themselves great harm. The reason of their mistake is that they only look at the excellence of the Sacraments; then they think they must be holy before they approach them, instead of reflecting *that it is the Sacraments which make the soul holy.* Thus, in trying to avoid pride, they fall into it, because, when at last they come to Communion, they judge themselves worthy to participate." The reverent abstainer from the Bread of Life will not find it easy to escape from Cassian's neat dilemma.

Post-Tridentine History of the Second View.—Historically speaking, it would seem that in more recent centuries the first and closest approach to advocacy of the Second, and now sanctioned, view should be attributed to Father Alphonsus

Salmeron (1585), one of the first companions of S. Ignatius of Loyola, who, together with his confrère, Father Laynez, was summoned in the capacity of theologian to the Council of Trent. Salmeron must therefore have had exceptional opportunities for gauging the mind of the Church regarding the use of Communion as manifested in its sessions—"De Eucharistia." With Salmeron one must associate his fellow-Jesuit, Father Christopher Madrid, since—in a sense—the two collaborated with the pen in promoting frequent Communion. Salmeron was desired by S. Ignatius to write a treatise on the subject of frequent Communion, which he did. We hear of one copy—presumably in manuscript—being sent by the founder to a Father Palmio. But its author, a man constantly engaged in important missions, does not appear to have lived to perfect his work himself, and it appeared in print years after his death. In his Commentaries, however, upon the Gospels, referring to dispositions for Communion, Father Salmeron uses almost the very words of Father Madrid's later written, but earlier published, treatise on "The Frequent Use of the Holy Eucharist." The following classification of dispositions, contained in the Commentaries (tom. ix., treatise 42) is extremely lucid, and of considerable importance for clearing up ideas :

"We reply that this worthiness [of the communicant] may be understood in three ways : Firstly, so that it be in itself of equivalent value (*quidam naturalis valor*) and the price paid by the

receiver, in which sense no creature, however eminent—not even the most holy Virgin herself—was worthy; for there can be no proportion between the finite and the infinite. Secondly, worthiness may be understood to mean perfection of virtue and gifts, but chiefly in the matter of devotion and reverence, so that a person approaches the Sacrament possessed of notable virtues and with great respect. But this degree of worthiness *is not exacted for a worthy reception* of the Sacrament, for it is often obtained by means of this very Sacrament, and, were it strictly necessary *very few would dare to communicate even once a year*, much less every day, as was the practice of the primitive Church. Thirdly, worthiness may mean a disposition in which the soul is free from any [grievous*] offence of the Divine Majesty, which involves previous examination of the conscience and confession, increases faith and a desire of uniting oneself to God, and of nourishing one's soul. *He who supplies these conditions communicates with sufficient worthiness*; for the Apostle demands nothing more than that a man 'prove himself, and so eat of this bread and drink of this cup.' From which we conclude that neither venial sins, nor distraction of mind—except it be exceeding great—nor weakness in virtue, nor diminution of devotion—that is to say, of the fervour of charity—render a

* This insertion in brackets obviously represents Salmeron's true meaning, on account of his reference to S. Paul and the interpretation of the Apostle's words by the Council of Trent (Session xiii., chap. 7).

man unworthy of Holy Communion ; because all these deficiencies are for the most part remedied by the very reception of the Eucharist, seeing that the latter was instituted to remove them. It is, therefore, desirable that people should frequently communicate, in spite of the barkings of some* who keep men away from the Tree of Life with terrors and scruples."

How closely this teaching, given in the sixteenth century, resembles that of Pius X. in the twentieth ! It is true that Salmeron says, in another passage : " With regard to the laity, daily Communion is suitable for some, weekly Communion for others, and for others, again, monthly Communion, and so on, according to the disposition of each and the judgment of the priest, provided the latter be prudent and kind." But before concluding that Salmeron is here pulling down what he had just built up, one needs to notice carefully what *kind* of " disposition " he is speaking of, for he adds : " But let him who discharges the office of spiritual father understand that he may not forbid Communion to anyone except *on account of sin* or scandal, or out of some consideration for what is more expedient or salutary." By " sin " the writer can only mean *mortal* sin, on account of what he had said above of venial sin—namely, that

* This touch of humanity is thought to refer to a famous and talented adversary of the Society of Jesus, who declared from a Valladolid pulpit that " to him one of the surest signs of the approach of Antichrist was the frequency of Communion which he saw around him " !

it is no obstacle. "Scandal," if really serious, is an exceptional cause, even now, for not receiving. The word "expedient" may, perhaps, refer to the necessity of not sacrificing clear duties of one's state or office for the sake of Eucharistic devotion, which the Decree would not question. "Salutary" is not so easily squared with the teaching of the Decree. Here Pius X. would seem to correct Salmeron, by virtually instructing us, in Article V., that considerations of what is more salutary will not justify a confessor in hindering Holy Communion, as long as the penitent receives in the state of grace and with a right intention. In short, the recent Decree tells us that Communion received under these two conditions *must always be* "salutary"; for it cannot fail, by its own inherent efficacy (*ex opere operato*), and as a Sacrament of the living, to increase grace.

Father Christopher Madrid, on the other hand, devotes himself to establishing the following contentions: (1) That those who are in the state of grace do what is better by communicating *at least every week than by abstaining from Communion from fear of irreverence.* (2) That for communicating holily and laudably, *even were it every day, it is enough to be free from mortal sin and to have a right intention*" (the very words of the Decree of 1905), and that if the fathers and doctors require other dispositions of a higher order, "they demand these, as we think, not as being necessary, but as more profitable, inasmuch as our most generous Lord bestows His favours

with greater liberality in proportion as the recipient is better disposed." Here again Madrid almost literally anticipates Article IV. of the Decree. In another place he holds it to be the general teaching of the saints that "there is no better way of securing good dispositions than by receiving this Sacrament frequently." This certainly is the sentiment of S. John Baptist de la Salle, founder of the Christian Brothers,* and of Venerable Father Claude de la Colombière, the director of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. "I say," says Father Claude, "that each time we communicate we receive an increase of merit and of habitual grace; so that one Communion must necessarily dispose us to profit by another."

The next author cited by Ferreres, in chronological order, is Father Anthony Molina, of the ancient Order of S. Bruno (1607), belonging to the Charterhouse of Miraflores. Here are some of the rules given by this Carthusian monk in the seventh part of his work.†

I. All the laity should be guided by the judgment of their confessors. II. The confessor should look well to the intention and aim of anyone who wishes to receive frequently. III. He should consider the person's state of life, so that he may frequent the Sacrament without neglecting his duties." (We may notice the difference between this precaution and considering a person's state of life in order to hinder Communion on account

* See "Notes on Daily Communion," p. 67.

† "Instruction for Priests," 1607; Barcelona, 1746.

of the *distractions* attached to it, or because that state is the married one, this last proceeding being expressly condemned by the Decree.) . . .

“ V. Let him notice whether the person profits by Communion or not, *but not easily deprive him of it, even though no clear improvement be perceptible.*

VI. Delay is no help towards communicating with greater reverence, or with better dispositions; *rather, it is frequency that conduces to all this.* . . .

IX. That Christ, our Lord, derives great honour and contentment from our frequenting the Most Holy Sacrament.” (We may compare here the words of the Decree: “ Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church,” etc.)

It seems useful to translate a notable passage from the same Carthusian, treating more particularly of dispositions for receiving the Holy Eucharist.

“ It remains for us to ascertain when it can be said that a man is so disposed and prepared as to be free to communicate. This question has already been solved above, in Chapter V., where we declare it to be the teaching of saints and theologians that a person who is not conscious of mortal sin, or, if he be, is sorry for it, has confessed and resolved to amend, is sufficiently disposed for receiving Communion, and can receive it lawfully, laudably, and fruitfully. We have also declared it to be the teaching of SS. Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine that the same dispositions which suffice for communicating, *suffice for communicating frequently and*

even daily. And the reason for this, given by S. Chrysostom, is most obvious—namely, that the Lord Who is received at Easter remains still the same, and that this sacred mystery ever retains the same holiness. Consequently, if he who communicated at Easter, in order to fulfil the precept of the Church, was sufficiently prepared to receive the Most Holy Sacrament, he may, providing that he keeps the same dispositions and desires it, receive again the day following, and also on the third and fourth day, and on every other day of the year and of his life. For the fact of his having received Communion yesterday in no way impairs the dispositions necessary for receiving to-day—rather, it improves them; and the more he communicates, the better disposed will he become, provided he lose not that disposition; or, if he should lose it, let him recover it again by contrition and confession.”

Following closely in order of time upon Molina come two fathers of the Order of S. Benedict—Marzilla and Valderas (1611). Marzilla penned the “Memorial of Compostela,” addressed—so the full title narrates—by the monk-confessors of the Benedictine monastery of S. Martin, at Santiago, to Prince Maximilian of Austria, Archbishop of Santiago, “treating of the frequency with which it is profitable for the laity to receive the Most Holy Sacrament.” The following propositions are selected by Ferreres as a sample of Marzilla’s teaching:

“That no more perfect dispositions are needed

for communicating one day after another than for doing so at an interval of many days. That, as regards the thing itself, there is no difference between advising *frequent* Communion and advising *daily* Communion."

This last is evidently the principle underlying the phraseology of the recent Roman Decrees. That of December 20, 1905, on "Frequent and Daily Communion," uses indifferently the expressions "frequent," "frequent and daily," "frequent and even daily," showing that daily Communion is not a separate species of Eucharistic practice, governed by rules different from those regulating frequent Communion. Again, in the answer of September 15, 1906, concerning the Communion of younger children, the term "frequent reception" is used, evidently in the sense of "even daily," since the questioners are referred to Article I. of the original Decree, where daily Communion is recommended to "all the faithful."

Marzilla further represents: "That it is much in accord with the desire of the Church to *advise* and *exhort* people generally to daily Communion at the present time. That daily Communion should not be abandoned on account of the example of certain saints who communicated at long intervals, nor on account of statutes appointing certain days upon which Communion shall be received." So, too, the Decree of 1905 declares that, in the case of religious institutes, "the appointed number of Communions shall be re

garded as a minimum, and not as setting a limit to the devotion of the religious."

Concerning the duty of the penitent to follow the direction of his confessor in the matter of frequency, Father Marzilla observes: "Once a confessor has absolved a penitent . . . even though he tell him not to receive Communion, the penitent is not obliged to obey him." His Benedictine brother, Valderas, tempers the crudity of this statement by saying that "the ignorant and ill-instructed, who do not know how to distinguish between mortal sin and venial, need the permission of the confessor."

What, then, is to be thought of Marzilla's assertion?

Father Ferreres considers it "less in harmony" with the Decree of Pius X., not because he holds the penitent to be strictly bound to follow the advice given, but because Marzilla seems to ignore here the point of Christian perfection recommended in the Decree, which, in Article V., declares that the penitent will perform an act of "greater" prudence and "more abundant" merit if he seeks the confessor's advice. That the penitent commits no sin of any sort by acting in independence seems to be the general and decided opinion of competent commentators on the Eucharistic Decrees. But of this more will be said under the section "The Priest as Confessor."

We come now to another pair of advocates of frequent Communion for all alike, on the lines now formally adopted by the Holy See—Juan

Sanchez and Juan de Vega, secular priests (1624). The "Select and Practical Disputations" of Sanchez, the work here referred to, was, it is true, put upon the Index, where it still remains. But, as Ferreres notes, in this very miscellaneous work there are not a few unsound opinions on other questions, totally unconnected with Communion, which amply account for its fate. Its condemnation, therefore, is no proof that views held by Sanchez about the necessary dispositions for frequent Communion were regarded as reprehensible, especially as others had already publicly maintained the same opinions without being blamed, and these have now received the sanction of authority. His disputation on Communion is summed up by Ferreres in one sentence of the writer's: "Finally, it may be gathered from this entire disputation how conformable it is to theological principles, Councils, and declarations of Cardinals and of the Holy Fathers, that laymen *who are free from mortal sin and have a right intention* in their Communions should receive the Holy Eucharist *every day*, since its actual reception is a higher virtue than the desire to receive it, and procures greater blessings for the receiver, and contributes towards the greater glory of God and the praise of the Divine Bounty."

Juan Sanchez, however, is even less in accord with Pius X. as to the relations between penitent and confessor than Marzilla. For while Marzilla seems only to have overlooked the point of perfection to be gained by seeking and following the

confessor's advice, Sanchez declares that it is *better not* to follow it when adverse to Communion, which opinion will not stand theologically, and is, moreover, flatly contradicted by Article V. of the Decree. There we are taught that such submission, though not a duty, is better.

Coming now to the other secular priest, De Vega, we find him in perfect agreement with Marzilla and Juan Sanchez as to the essential conditions for a daily reception of the Eucharist; but he differs from the Benedictine (and, of course, from Sanchez) on the point of submission to confessors.

"I do not agree," writes De Vega, "with what he says, on account of what I have written about the merit of obedience." Still, he does not maintain that the penitent is *bound* to submit, but only that submission is a praiseworthy act of virtue, which is exactly what Article V. declares to us. That article, however, in order to prevent any collision between communicants sufficiently disposed, according to Articles I. and II., and their confessors, warns the latter "not to hinder anyone (*ne quemquam avertant*)" who possesses the only two qualifications demanded in those articles—the state of grace and a right intention.

Two other less notable works are referred to by Ferreres of prior dates to those of Sanchez and De Vega—namely, "An Apology for Frequent Communion," by Father José de Santa Maria, of the Order of S. Francis, which defends "with a certain timidity" the correct principles, and the

“Epilogue” of Antonio Bernaldo de Braojos. The views of the last named are summed up in the following paragraph: “This being the case, the safe, certain, and true conclusion to be drawn is, that for any Christian who finds himself unconscious of mortal sin, or, if he be guilty of any, duly confesses it . . . it is a lawful, holy, and praiseworthy thing to communicate every day, even though he be conscious of weaknesses and imperfections. And to do this will be a better thing than to abstain from Communion, though it were out of fear, reverence, or humility.”

EXTREMES AND EXTREMES.

So far we have reviewed some of the influences that were at work, after the Council of Trent, tending to bring about a revival of “the holy traditions of our forefathers,” which, as we saw, S. Ignatius—following the lead of the Tridentine Fathers—considered to be a worthy object of “most lively solicitude.” But the arch-enemy of souls was preparing a set-back to this alarming return of Eucharistic fervour and piety. That set-back was the heresy known as Jansenism.

When this soul-blighting heresy began its desolating work of barring access to the “Divine medicine,” it found the soil partly prepared by the sayings and writings of men who had strongly opposed the Eucharistic revival as an almost heretical abuse of Divine things and its present promoters as being of doubtful orthodoxy.

A characteristic anecdote is quoted from the historian Astrain. The Cistercian Abbot, Father Luis de Estrada, of Aragon, narrated how, while visiting a Catholic household, the hostess exclaimed: "Praise be to God, Father Abbot, that in this house we have never fallen into the way of communicating frequently, but only at long intervals." This, added the Abbot, the good woman said because she fancied that she would have fallen into heresy had she approached the Sacrament frequently!

The Jansenists, under pretext of restoring the severe penitential discipline of the primitive Church, against the will of the Church, alienated men from the use of Communion by an arbitrary abuse of the tribunal of Penance, and by exacting as necessary conditions for Communion a degree of holiness, such as none could hope to reach without the powerful aid of that very Sacrament from which Jansenism made it its business to debar them.* The result was that it became common for Catholics to omit their Easter duties, out of reverence for the same! In the hapless Jansenist community of nuns at Port-Royal, governed by the vocationless but indomitable girl-Abbess, the unfortunate Angélique Arnauld—the Abbey being a sort of spiritual preserve of the family—religious, directed by the arch-Jansenist Antoine, of that ilk, would go for several years

* Of course, Jansenism was not wholly occupied with Eucharistic severities; that was only one of its many excesses, though perhaps the most ruinous of all.

without making the Easter Communion, on the same delusive plea of reverence.

The Catholic Dictionary, under "Jansenism," cites an instance of at least one of the nuns who maintained the plea even on her death-bed, and refused the last Sacraments!

This was one extreme—an extreme of rigour—which had itself probably been due to the extreme moral laxity so visible in the state of French society at the time. "Abyss calleth upon abyss," and one extreme is always apt to drive those who revolt against it into a fresh one.

People began to teach, in opposition, that daily Communion was a Divine precept, binding the conscience of every individual Catholic under pain of sin. They went one better than the Council of Trent by declaring it to be a *Divine ordinance* that the faithful should communicate whenever they attended Mass. From these principles followed logically the abuse, mentioned in the Decree "Sacra Tridentina Synodus," of carrying Holy Communion secretly to people whom some slight ailment kept indoors, even on Good Friday—a day when, according to the received practice of the Roman Church, only the celebrant communicated.*

The Holy See condemned Jansenism; it also repressed the excesses of its opponents.† The

* It is plain, however, from evidence produced by Ferreres that in Spain, at least, it was at one time customary for the faithful also to communicate on that day.

† "Cum ad Aures" of Innocent XI., A.D. 1679.

curious fact, however, remains that, while the repression of these abuses appears to have produced a speedy effect, the Jansenistic spirit which provoked them "survived the declaration of the Holy See," as the Decree tells us.

Perhaps this anomaly may be traced to that fearsome distrust of God breathed by Satan into the ear of our first mother, Eve, and which has descended to fallen man as a miserable heirloom of the original transgression. This spirit of rigour, more conformable to the Old Law than to the New, although powerfully checked by the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart, extended its chilling influence into the eighteenth, and even nineteenth, century; indeed, one may say truly that we ourselves are in some respects barely convalescent from the after-effects of the Jansenistic plague, as regards some of our notions about daily Communion—a state of things partly due, no doubt, to the presence on our familiar bookshelves of writings which are not even convalescent. This will become evident to anyone who peruses certain extracts from comparatively modern works, particularly those in the native tongue of the Arnaulds, which are to be found quoted with reprobation in such a book as "The Confessor after God's Heart." *

The above very incomplete tracing of the development, in post-Tridentine days, of those ideas concerning frequent Communion, which

* "The Confessor after God's Heart."

have now reached their maturity in the recent Decrees, may perhaps contribute towards a fuller understanding of the spirit which our Holy Father, Pope Pius X., desires to infuse into the practice of Holy Communion.

PART I

THE PRIEST AND DAILY COMMUNION

THE Holy See has promulgated its instructions on the subject of frequent and daily Communion. It wishes it for "all the faithful," for younger children who have just made their first Communion, as well as for their elders (Answer of September 15, 1906).

A letter, too, was addressed, at the Pope's command, by Cardinal Cretoni, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, April 10, 1907, to each member of the Catholic Episcopate, directing a Triduum to be held annually, by preference in the octave of Corpus Christi, in which the following passage occurs:

"Hence our Holy Father, greatly rejoicing at the salutary fruit already produced" (*i.e.*, by frequent and daily Communion), "and being exceedingly anxious that it should be lasting, and, moreover, constantly increase, has charged me with the duty of urging upon your lordship and all the Bishops of the Catholic world that, continuing as they have begun, they should strive their utmost (*omnem impendant operam*) to procure that the

faithful receive the Holy Eucharist more frequently, and even daily, since it is by means of this Divine Banquet that their supernatural life will receive nourishment and flourish."

Such, then, is the goal to be reached. Yet there can be no need to prove that its attainment will practically depend far more upon the action of the individual priest than upon the promulgation of authoritative documents or zealous efforts on the part of diocesans. It is the individual priest who is in direct and daily contact with Christian souls, and these will inevitably gather their notion of the true mind of the Church concerning the practice of Holy Communion from the interpretation of the same, as embodied day by day in the attitude of mind and practical action of their immediate pastors. In this, as in other matters, it will be a case of "As priest, so people."

For this reason it will be useful to consider what are the means for giving effect to Papal Decrees, and which will need to be taken by the priest in his threefold relationship to the faithful as parochial priest, confessor, and preacher. Thus we shall be proceeding upon the lines of the Decree, Article VII., which runs as follows:

"But since it is plain that by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors, and preachers, in accord-

ance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism (part ii., cap. iv., n. 60), *are frequently, and with great zeal, to exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.*"

I. THE PRIEST AS PAROCHUS.

Needless to say, the term "parochus," or parish priest, is not used here in its strict canonical sense, but as including all those who are appointed to the cure of souls in missionary or quasi-missionary countries. And, indeed, no priest of the latter category would be likely to plead exception from the Decree on the ground that he is not technically a parish priest. Under this heading there is comparatively little to be said that does not belong more properly to the priest as preacher and confessor. Nevertheless, the authority, influence, and zeal of the head-priest on a mission will obviously play a very important part in encouraging and facilitating the preachers and confessors in their work of promoting the Decrees. If there be but one priest in a mission, then he becomes parish priest, confessor, and preacher all in one. A point which will depend mainly upon the head-priest is the question of affording all facilities for the administration of Holy Communion. The practice of frequent and daily Communion can hardly flourish unless it be open to the faithful to communicate *before* Mass as well as during it. It will be of little use to exhort parishioners "frequently and with great zeal" to practise frequent and daily Communion if we do not

remove practical difficulties which effectually hinder them, or some of them, from doing what we inculcate. Except Holy Communion be obtainable before Mass, easily and without any deterrent formalities being required, frequent Communion will become, not necessarily, indeed, the privilege of the more virtuous, but certainly of the well-to-do or leisured classes. In any larger congregation, especially in towns and cities, there will generally be a certain number whose duties and occupations would admit of their communicating before Mass, and so carrying out the Pope's wishes, but who would be quite unable to stay until the end of the Holy Sacrifice for even a modest thanksgiving. Then, again, there are really delicate people, who cannot remain fasting for long after rising, and who would otherwise need to have Communion brought to them in their houses. Yet many of these people may be just the ones whose daily surroundings place them in considerable temptation, or who require special grace to sanctify their ill-health, and whose souls, therefore, stand in peculiar need of their "daily Bread."

The chief objection to providing Holy Communion before Mass is obviously that it may lead to people rushing in at the last moment, just as the priest issues vested from the sacristy, and receiving the Holy Eucharist without sufficient preparation. But is this worse than rushing in when the Mass is well advanced, or rushing out at its close, or before its close, without sufficient thanksgiving? Moreover, if it was not already plain before, Article IV. of the Decree now makes

it perfectly clear that preparation and thanksgiving are not to be considered as urged upon all alike in some definite quantity, but are to be measured "according to each one's *strength, circumstances, and duties.*" Hence, these most desirable forms of devotion are not mentioned in Article I., where the only two *necessary* conditions for even *daily* Communion are laid down. They ought, however, to be performed, for the reason stated in Article IV.—namely, because "The Sacraments of the New Law"—though inevitably fruitful, *ex opere operato*, to a soul that puts no essential obstacles, such as mortal sin *alone* is in the case of the Eucharist—"produce a *greater* effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better." But, it may be said, will not Communion before Mass often lead to persons putting too brief an interval between the finishing touches of their toilette and their appearance at the Communion-rails? Will not the attraction of warm blankets, in the winter months especially, cause a man to curtail his preparatory devotions? Possibly sometimes, or with some. But it is to be remembered that there is no law demanding that the preparation should be mainly in the morning of the Communion itself. People may, and often do, prepare overnight. There can be no possible objection, for example, to a shop-assistant making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament on the eve of Communion, and confining his or her morning preparations to recollection of mind and a few brief and devout aspirations before approaching the rails. In the light of the Decree, we can see that such a course, or even a somewhat less

devout one, would be far preferable to forgoing the great grace of Holy Communion in order to "safeguard the honour and reverence due to Our Lord." It is *our great need* of Our Lord that we are bidden by the Church, in His name, to consider in the first place. Let us, however, suppose that real faults should be committed in the form of careless preparation. Whether we look at these as venial sins, if they should reach that point, or as impediments to grace, the actual frequent reception of the Sacrament constitutes the best remedy from both points of view. For the Eucharist is the *divinum pharmacum* for *all* our spiritual defects—those, therefore, included, which attend our reception of it; and it would be a depreciation of the grace-giving power inherent in the Sacrament itself to compare certain losses of grace due to negligences in the *opus operantis* of the communicant with the sum total of grace to be derived from the multiplication of communions *ex opere operato*. Our own efforts do, indeed, widen the capacity of the soul for the reception of Sacramental grace in greater quantities; yet one must avoid the opposite error of attaching *undue* importance to those devout industries of our own, as though they contributed one jot to the grace-giving causality of the Sacramental instrument itself: for that comes from Our Lord alone, and not in any sense whatever from ourselves.

Should such negligences be feared, they will be best prevented if the priest, as preacher, performs thoroughly his task of instructing the people.

But, do what we will, there is no way of making things mathematically sure and certain. The priest will, in the last resort, have to give the people the truth, and the whole truth, about Communion, and, for the rest, trust largely to the working of grace in their hearts for the results. In far graver matters than the due fulfilment of devotions before and after Holy Communion we trust, and must in the very nature of things trust, to the goodwill of the faithful. We have no means, for example, even of testing whether those who, to all outward appearances, have made ample preparation for receiving, and present themselves at the rails, have kept in the state of grace itself since their last Confession. So that if we insisted upon certainties in these matters of conscience, we should have to stop giving Holy Communion altogether, in order to be on the safe side. If the Holy See is our sure and prudent guide in desiring daily Communion for all alike, then the priest will not err from the path of prudence and safety by affording every possible facility for its reception by the busy, the hard-worked, or the delicate, as well as by those who are masters of their own time and well able to fast for a good hour in the early morning.

Since — in practice — Parochial Visitation is carried on as much by assistant priests on a mission staff as by their head, that subject, in its connexion with the promotion of Frequent and Daily Communion, will be discussed later.*

* Page 69.

II. THE PRIEST AS CONFESSOR.

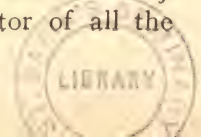
It is in the individual guidance of souls that the best hopes lie of efficiently promoting a frequent reception of the Eucharist. All the circumstances of Confession tend to add special force to the direction given in the tribunal of Penance.

The office of confessor supplies a priest with exceptional opportunities for carrying out the instruction of the Decree, and "exhorting frequently and with great zeal" to the practice of frequent and even daily Communion.

As, however, the said instruction seems to apply also in a special manner to the priest as preacher, the significance of the words quoted will be more fully considered under the next heading or section. Here it will be more appropriate to discuss matters which more specially concern the confessor as such.

Of course the "Sacra Tridentina Synodus" has greatly altered his position with regard to control over the frequency with which penitents shall communicate.

1. All the chief commentators on the famous Decree are agreed that the confessor has now no longer any right to *forbid* or to *permit* Communion in the case of a penitent who fulfils the two conditions contained in Article I. of the Decree. The penitent, though he is exhorted to perform the act of submission of *consulting* the confessor (for he no longer needs "permission," since he has it already from the Supreme Spiritual Director of all the



faithful, the Pope), is not bound under pain of any sin whatever to seek the advice, nor to follow it when received. That this is indeed the general view of competent writers will be seen from the following examples :

Don Pierre Sebastien, O.S.B. : “. . . . The penitent will perform an act of virtue in seeking and following the confessor’s advice,” but he is not bound to this (*mais il n’y est pas tenu*).*

Père Lintelo, S.J., whose writings on daily Communion have received special praise from Pius X., writes concerning the confessor : “ If his intervention is sought for, let us not forget that it is sought *purely as a matter of counsel (à titre de simple conseil)*.” The same writer quotes Père Choupin : † “ The Decree gives us to understand most clearly that the consent or permission of the confessor is not demanded (*ne sont pas exigés*). The confessor ought simply to give his advice. Without question, it is advisable (*il convient*) that the penitent should follow the advice of his confessor ; but he is not obliged to do so, and he may use his right.” ‡

* *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, March, 1907. See “ Notes on Daily Communion,” by the present writer, second edition, p. 45.

† “ Études,” *Bulletin Canonique*, May 20, 1907, p. 542.

‡ Lintelo, “ Devoirs des Confesseurs,” Tournai, 1907, p. 25 : a reprint of a paper read by Père Lintelo at the Eucharistic Congress, held in Metz, 1907, presided over by Cardinal Vannutelli as Papal Legate. After the reading at the third session of the Priests’ Section, Monseigneur Dubois, Bishop of Verdun, rose to say that he had it from the

Mariani, another approved commentator, expresses himself in exactly similar terms concerning the right of the penitent.

Father Ferreres, who has been so largely drawn upon in the introduction, himself adopts the same view absolutely, although he dwells somewhat more than others upon the excellence of the act of submission recommended by the Decree: "With regard to the advice of the confessor, it is certain that one who has a right intention and is in the state of grace may, without any positive fault, communicate without the advice of his confessor. But with a view to guarding against hallucinations, in order to foster that humility and spirit of docility so becoming in a Christian, it is *better and more perfect* to be guided by the confessor's advice, which is improperly called licence or permission." So, too, further on (p. 116, No. 226) he adds: "Neither does it belong to the confessor himself really to permit or to forbid Communion; consequently, although the Decree "*Quemadmodum*"* uses such expressions as

Cardinal Legate himself, who had asked him to state the fact, that Father Lintelo's writings were those which most accurately reflected the ideas and wishes of the Holy Father ("*Le Saint Sacrement*": Full Report of the Eucharistic Congress, 1907," p. 149).

* A Decree relating to religious congregations, issued by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, August 17, 1891. Amongst other provisions, it reserves the right of permitting or forbidding the Communion of the religious *exclusively* to the confessor.

“permit,” “forbid,” “permission,” “forbiddance,” to-day such expressions must be interpreted in a qualified sense, and are only equivalent to “advising” and “dissuading.”

The authority of the priest in his capacity of confessor is not an unlimited authority. He can only command in so far as ecclesiastical law and approved theology authorize him. And what more is that beyond enjoining the “penance”? We speak of his obliging the restitution of ill-gotten goods, the avoidance of immediate and voluntary occasions of sin. But here he is not using any discretionary power; he is only enforcing duties that lie in the very nature of the case before him. Viewed, again, as spiritual director, the authority he has over his client is only that which he derives from the fact of the latter’s consenting to be guided by his counsels.

2. The confessor’s right of objecting to daily Communion only comes into play when he sees clearly either that Communion is received sacrilegiously—*i.e.*, in a state of conscious *mortal* sin—or else that the right intention or motive is *manifestly* lacking. Touching upon the matter of right intention, it may be observed that the confessor should not be over-severe in criticizing the uprightness of motives. On the one side, to communicate merely for the object of being thought holy by others (as distinguished from a healthy wish not to give disedification to the weak, or bad example)—to communicate, so to say, automatically, and without any mental attention to the

sacredness of the act—*i.e.*, “out of routine”—are instances of unworthy motives or crooked intentions, and would usually produce venially sinful acts of Communion, although, *post factum*, some fruit would necessarily follow if the state of grace be there. Since the motive is wrong in these instances, the act itself of receiving Communion is infected by the faulty motive—quite a different case from that of a person whose intention is right, but who commits some deliberate venial sin at the moment of receiving—say a deliberate uncharitable thought. Hence Communion of the kind cannot be positively advised, because one may never advise anyone to perform a wrong action as such.

Yet, on the other hand, some prudence will be needed in order not to scrutinize motives too strictly, both on account of the obvious difficulty of sifting them with any certainty, and of the danger of fostering, or perhaps originating, scrupulosity in penitents. Here a theological principle appears to be important. There is a distinction to be drawn between the principal, or predominant, motive from which a person acts—the true *causa finalis*—and what are called *motiva impulsiva*—reasons which so far influence our act as to increase our readiness to perform it, or prompt us to perform it now, rather than later, but yet do not constitute the adequate reason of the act itself. No doubt there may often be a certain mixture of motives in the performance of spiritual acts or duties. We should not be

inclined to judge too severely some half-starving curé in France just now whose desire to say Mass was not altogether free from a consideration of the badly needed stipend to be received. It would be extremely rash to infer that the motive which monopolized the poor curé's will in offering the Holy Sacrifice was to secure a good meal for once. Hence the useful remark of Dom Sebastien : "This admixture will not vitiate the act of Communion unless the human alloy predominate over all."

Given, however, that the unworthy motive does prevail, has the confessor nothing more that he can do except dissuade from daily Communion? Not so. Just as a penitent will very rarely have to be dismissed without absolution if the confessor zealously help him on the spot to acquire the necessary dispositions, so few will need to be restrained from daily Communion if the confessor endeavour to purify the penitent's intention when the latter is found to be manifestly crooked. Probably all that will be needed in many cases is to explain to the penitent what has just been said about mixed motives. Often, too, devout persons may mistake a suggestion or temptation, say, of spiritual vanity, for a real motive. This is more likely to occur with sensitive, self-conscious characters—those who can hardly avoid reflecting how their actions will appear to others. But at the worst it ought not to be difficult to persuade a person of the folly of unworthy motives in such a matter as Holy Communion. Indeed,

in all probability, a genuinely wrong motive of this kind is of rare occurrence amongst us.

From such considerations as these, a priest will probably infer that the second condition for daily Communion laid down in Article I., and further explained in Article II., needs to be interpreted in a large-minded, and not in an exacting, spirit. And surely if, in his self-accusation at Confession, we are bound to believe the penitent, whether speaking in his favour or disfavour, we shall at least be fully justified in giving him like credit when he assures us concerning his motive and intention. In the last resort it is always upon the conscience of the penitent that we must perforce depend for a true knowledge of his interior state.

Concerning younger children, to whom frequent, and even daily Communion is recommended by the Holy See at least as earnestly as to older ones and adults,* it would be a serious error to imagine that these little ones of Christ are incapable of having a right intention, even though, if questioned, they may not be able to give a very intelligible account of their motives. As the deliberative portion of the Decree referred to points out, the natural simplicity and simple-mindedness of children tells in their favour in this respect. Moreover, nothing is easier than to put motives before them for communicating suited to their capacity, such as "that Our Lord may

* See complete text of the Answer given by the Sacred Congregation of the Council, September 15, 1906 (*Acta S. Sedis*, October, 1906).

love them very much," "that they may become great friends of His," "that they may become good," and the like. There is really no difficulty in securing this right motive in the young; and as for the only other necessary condition—namely, freedom from mortal sin—that is far more likely to be found in children than in their elders. As for their traditional thoughtlessness, that cannot hinder them deriving fruit from the Sacrament, and moreover, as the Decree says, is not to be made too much of. "Our Lord," writes Monseigneur de Segur, "does not expect from them more than they can give."

Assiduity in Confessional Duties.

This would appear to be a first requisite for promoting the Decrees. As has been said in the previous section, the frequent and zealous exhortations to daily Communion required by the Decree can have small practical result unless facilities be granted for carrying them out.

But, as Père Lintelo reminds us, such assiduity is by no means identical with having to spend an increased number of hours in the confessional, nor with hearing a greater number of Confessions. It is rather a question of being at hand, and being known to be so, at stated times adapted to the character and occupations of the congregation. It is a question, too, of suppressing every sign of unwillingness to perform our ministry, sometimes under somewhat trying or inconvenient conditions. If we were to take our stand on the

axiom that we are not bound to minister when applicants do not ask *rationabiliter*, there would be small chance of forwarding frequent and daily Communion. And then the question would arise as to whether a petition, necessitated by a desire to conform to the reiterated wishes of the Holy Father—not to mention other reasons that might transpire in the course of actual Confession—could be in any true sense styled “unreasonable.”

Let us take a by no means fanciful case—that of some young Catholic who, owing to what he has heard or read of the efficacy of frequent Communion, turns with a new hope to this “Divine remedy” for the cure of some long-standing vicious habit or other, and determines to enter upon a long course of daily Communion.

In such a case, a gap created in the treatment, by inability to get a Confession, might spell relapse, renewed discouragement, and ultimate failure.

A little reflection will show that zeal for confessional duty does not tend in the long run to a multiplication of Confessions. Canon Antoni, whose writings on daily Communion have also received Papal commendation, writes on this point: “If we desire that daily, or at least frequent, Communion, or on feast days, should not be a chimerical dream, we must, while procuring that frequent Communion shall flourish in the world, *strive to diminish the number of Confessions that are not necessary.* Let us train souls to communicate on every day that they can with-

out fear and with joy during weeks, and—if it should be necessary—even during months, without going to Confession, when they are not clear as to having sinned mortally since their last Confession.” This, surely, is sound and fearless theology. For, albeit useful to confess our venial sins, yet we can obtain forgiveness for such lighter faults “by other means,” as the Council of Trent expressly teaches. This striving to reduce the number of Confessions, not necessitated by the commission of grievous sin, is not the same thing as viewing venial sin in the light of a negligible quantity—which, as an offence of God, it can never be—or as if it did not diminish the *amount* of fruit obtainable from Holy Communion. The point of Antoni’s noticeable words is that Communion should not be omitted merely because a Confession “of devotion” has not been made, from one cause or another, since these obstacles to *more abundant* fruit—*i.e.*, venial sins—can be removed without Confession—say, by acts of sorrow, the contrite use of holy water, etc. Grant that a person has omitted Confession out of laziness, or preference for some amusement: even so, that person is less likely to yield again to unspiritual influences in virtue of the fresh supply of grace he will receive in Communion. Once more, the *divinum pharmacum* is the sovereign remedy for all defects, including those which enter into our use of it.

Frasinetti, Prior of Santa Sabina, Genoa, whose able writings are well known to priests, writes

thus: "Supposing that confessors were scarce and were too busy hearing the Confessions of persons who approached the Sacraments rarely, and who possibly needed them greatly, especially if they were men . . . one would have to exhort you to go to Communion even daily, while going to Confession but once a fortnight, or even at longer intervals." There is fair evidence that in the earlier centuries of Christianity the faithful only confessed their mortal sins. This would seem to be implied in the following passage from S. Augustine, read in the Gospel homily assigned in the Breviary to Tuesday within the octave of Corpus Christi: "How many receive from the Altar, and receiving, die. Hence the Apostle says: 'He eats and drinks judgment. . . . Let your sins, though they be daily ones [*i.e.*, venial; see Decree, 'the stains of daily faults'], at all events not be mortal. And, before you approach, be careful to say: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' If you forgive, you shall be forgiven. Approach confidently (*secure*); it is your bread, and not poison." Thus the saint and doctor taught his people to be sorry for their venial sins immediately before receiving the Eucharist, but not to allow these minor blemishes to hinder them from confident approach to the sacred Banquet. If they were not mortal, repentance of heart—without any other form of penance—sufficed.

Attention to the kind of spiritual life led by a penitent is of far greater importance than an exact

reckoning of the length of time that has intervened between his Confessions. To exact weekly Confessions as a condition for daily Communion would not only be arbitrary in the light of Article I., but contrary to the mind of the Holy See, which, in a Decree of February 14, 1906, exempts *daily communicants* from the necessity of "weekly Confession" (*i.e.*, Confession *once in every week*), which would otherwise form a condition for gaining plenary indulgences.

Frasinetti observes on this point: "They [priests] ought rather to instruct their penitents that it [weekly Confession] is in no way obligatory, and consequently they should encourage them to continue their Communions, although eight days or a fortnight may have expired, always providing that they do not commit grievous sin in the meantime, such as would debar them from Communion even within the eight days."

The Jansenist's war against Holy Communion—for it can be called nothing else—really opened in the confessional, which he made an arbitrary and cruel weapon for scaring souls away from union with God. And the system of *insisting* on Confession before Communion, where no grievous sin exists making Confession a duty, sounds like no very faint echo of the Jansenistic war-whoop. The golden mean would, therefore, appear to be this: While not falling into the opposite extreme of *refusing* to receive the Confession of a would-be communicant—merely because we feel confident that he does not need it—at the same time, to

train penitents to have the courage of their convictions as to their freedom from mortal sin, and not to magnify the Sacrament of Penance at the expense of the Holy Eucharist. A priest who demanded what the Church does not demand, or forbade what the Church allows, would at once be placing himself in a position of illegality, and would be taking upon his own private shoulders all responsibility for the consequences; whereas, by following in the lines traced for him by supreme ecclesiastical authority, he throws the burden upon the Church, and she, with Christ's authority at her back, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to aid her, will be well able to bear it. We may conclude this part of the subject with the words of Cardinal Gennari, written years before the Eucharistic Decrees appeared: "It is no slight wrong to deprive a penitent, were it but once, of the benefits which Communion procures for him, without just and grave reason." Now that the Decrees are in force, no just, and still more no "grave," reason can exist for disallowing what the Church not only allows, but earnestly desires.

III. THE PRIEST AS PREACHER.

The Decree directs that the priest shall "exhort" the faithful to the practice of frequent and even daily Communion—"frequently and with great zeal." Let us weigh carefully each of these expressions.

Exhort.—The word implies more than a passive

attitude of non-intervention—more even than mild approval of those who are seen to be carrying out the practice, or who show themselves desirous of doing so.

In this matter a distinction may be drawn between a theoretic, public exposition of the principles and benefits of frequent and daily Communion, and the practical application of principles to the individual soul in private or in the confessional—not, however, in the sense that we should teach one thing in the pulpit and then whittle it down to nothing in private. To content oneself with telling individuals, who do not relish the exhortations that they need not trouble about the matter, since, of course, no one is bound under sin to practise frequent or daily Communion, would be an instance of whittling. Assuring a person, after the exhortation, *e.g.*, that, after all, no one is bound under sin to carry out the decrees, although theologically correct, would be an instance of this. The point here is that, in dealing with individuals, allowance may reasonably be made for differences in spiritual strength and energy, for force of preconceived notions, prejudices, inveterate habits, personal circumstances and opportunities, and the like. Thus, it will probably be impossible to procure at once the adoption of daily Communion by an elderly person who has communicated but two or three times a year during three-fourths of a lifetime. Prudence and common sense alike suggest that we should content ourselves with half a loaf *when the whole loaf cannot be had*—

say, with monthly Communion, but always with an ulterior view to leading the person by degrees to the full practice—supposing that his external circumstances make that possible. There are, of course, many whose clear duties or daily avocations, unfortunately, limit them to bi-weekly Communion, or weekly, or even to a yet smaller allowance of the Heavenly Bread. But even in such cases the true ideal of Eucharistic practice should be faithfully proposed and maintained, to the end that it may be adopted in full, or at all events more fully, when circumstances become more favourable. This is altogether different to setting up a standard of practice in the pulpit which falls below the one adopted in the Decrees, or upholding that standard in public and lowering it systematically in private.

Here a difficulty may be suggested. “Of what use is it,” some priest may ask hopelessly, “to talk to my people about daily Communion when I have cause to be thankful if I can but succeed in getting half of them up to their Easter duties?” There is an old saying that if an archer wants to hit the mark, he must aim something above it. To begin with, one may use exhortations to frequent Communion as a means for raising the people to a more universal observance of Easter obligations. But, further, is there not in such an objection too much of natural despondency, and a certain lack of trust, in supernatural assistance? Granting that in some parishes much effort be needed to secure the annual Communion, there

will generally be a few whose spiritual standard is far higher. Why not use these few as a small nucleus for a larger body of frequent or daily communicants? We might well look to members of our guilds or confraternities for support in this matter. By suggesting to them the right motives, any shamefaced reluctance they may feel to making themselves the object of remark by thus setting an example, can often be overcome. Good example is contagious, as well as bad, and others would soon begin to gather round them. But the discouraged priest should remember for his comfort that it is not merely upon the effect of the good example shown by these few that he may count. The fidelity and bravery of this tiny apostolic band, the little sacrifices it makes in order to further the desires of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord—"the desire of Jesus Christ," as the Decree tells us; the prayers they may be privately asked to offer for the spread of the salutary practice among the flock—all this will assuredly bring down a special blessing on the mission, and effect a notable change in its Eucharistic habits, though perhaps at first but slowly. Or if no adults be amenable to this apostolic plan, why not begin with the children—the Mass-servers, for example? It is generally in the rising generation that the hopes of any great moral movement chiefly lie. The Indies were evangelized by S. Francis Xavier on this plan. The spiritual wonders which it was given to him to work were wrought largely by means of the

children. Through them holy influences are introduced into their households.

And this leads us to another point of special importance for the promotion of the Holy Father's aims, namely :

The Training of First Communicants.

Be the spiritual level of a congregation what it may, here at least is a golden opportunity for introducing or developing frequent Communion. These little ones are the hope of the mission; they are of an age exceptionally capable of spiritual formation. They are for the most part thoroughly tractable in religious matters, and endowed with a plentiful stock of sheer good-will. It is evident, then, that they can and should be started upon their communicant career equipped with sound and authorized principles, instead of unsound and obsolete ones. The priest who omits to imbue each batch of first communicants from the first with all the recently approved ideas about frequent and daily Communion—say, by instructing them that they are henceforward to communicate once a month—would not only be virtually ignoring the recent instructions of Rome on his own private authority, but would obviously be helping to perpetuate for another generation of his people that very economy of the Bread of Life which Rome desires should finally cease, “to the rejection of a contrary practice anywhere prevailing.” (Sacred Congregation Council, Sep-

tember 15, 1906: "De Communionem Puerorum"). A priest might reply: "I know the circumstances of my children, and these are prohibitive of anything more than monthly Communion." It is not easy to understand why, if Communion be possible every month—on a Sunday, for example—it should be impossible on *every* Sunday, unless the real objection be that more frequent Communion would entail extra confessional duty. As to this alleged *fact*, the objector might be referred to the observations already made on this point.* As to the merits of the difficulty, it should be enough to point to the words "and with much zeal." True, the Decree is there speaking of exhortation; but, then, this exhortation is directed to be made to all the faithful, and therefore to first communicants. And if exhortation bear such fruit as to increase confessional duty, it must be clear that such increase of meritorious labour comes within the scope of the Decree.

But let us not take things for granted too hastily. Are not *some* of these children more favourably situated? If so, a priest well acquainted with the circumstances of all the children will have little trouble in uniting the more fortunate ones in a small group of more frequent, if not daily, communicants. Surely that is better than to include all wholesale *in eadem damnatione* after a rough-and-ready fashion.

* See p. 48, last paragraph.

This little group will serve to keep alive in the minds of their companions, and of others as well, the true ideal of Eucharistic practice. The co-operation of some good Catholic schoolmistress or teacher, who attends daily Mass, might be enlisted for keeping an eye upon this band, and for encouraging it by her own example. If nun-teachers be available for the purpose, so much the better.

To take the other supposition—namely, that *all* these children are hindered by their circumstances from receiving oftener than once a month—would it not be more in accord with the Decrees to tell them “*at least* once a month, if you cannot manage more,” adding exhortations to go “as often as ever you can, and the oftener that is, the better will Our Lord be pleased.” In other words, let them be taught the right idea *from the beginning*, and let it be repeatedly insisted on. The fruit will come in due time.

If at first only a very few practise frequent Communion in a parish, the fidelity of these, the prayers which they may be asked to offer for the spread of the practice, will gradually bring about a notable change. The Holy See cannot in reason be supposed to imagine that such a state of things as the present difficulty describes is unknown; yet, knowing it well, the Vicar of Christ would have us take up courage, and put his prescription for the “restoration of all things in Christ” to the proof. No one can question that priests have often ample provoca-

tion to despair; yet when all things seem blackest we have reached the precise point when, more than ever, our whole reliance must be placed on supernatural means, and on blind adhesion to the divinely assisted guidance of the Church. "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" "Come and see!" Can any good result come from advocating frequent and daily Communion in a back-sliding parish? Just try it!

The priest, then, is to exhort. But what is needed for *effective* exhortation? It is but a truism to say that the preacher who wishes to convince and persuade others needs to be convinced and persuaded himself.

To this end, besides prayer and serious meditation or reflection upon the untold benefits contained in this adorable Sacrament, he will probably have to learn his subject, and, what is very probable, he may need, first of all, to *unlearn* a page of his moral theology—that on which he has hitherto been instructed concerning frequent and daily Communion; for the late Decrees have virtually deleted that page, and replaced it by a new one. There is at present hardly one—if there be as yet even one—standard text-book of moral theology which does not in some degree conflict with the newly authorized doctrine on the subject.

As Ferreres observes: "It needs no great knowledge of the history of theology to perceive how many opinions have become antiquated in virtue of this Decree (see **S. Alphonsus**, *loc. cit.* ;

Benedict XIV., *loc. cit.*; **Berardi**, 'Praxis Confessar.,' vol. iii., No. 969 *et seq.*)."*

This may be called the negative part of the study needed. As for the positive, the priest will have to master thoroughly the theological principles which underlie the Decree, such as the true purpose of Christ's institution of Sacraments in general, and of this Sacrament in particular; the *ex opere operato* character of Sacramental operation; the bearing of venial sin upon the practice of frequent Communion—that it is no obstacle to it, but rather a disease to be cured by it; the right idea of "reverence" towards the Sacrament, which consists in using it according to the "desire of Jesus Christ and His Church" mentioned in the earlier part of the Decree, and not in abstaining from it out of a false humility not desired by Our Lord, etc.

The perusal of some of the many commentaries on the Decrees will prove an indispensable aid to such study. For the purpose of preparing instructions on the subject, it might be well to take the Decree of December, 1905 part by part, developing and illustrating each point, and forestalling those difficulties which are most likely to present themselves to the minds of the congregation. It would be useful to show our hearers that daily Communion is not "new," but a return to what is as old as the Church herself. This can easily be done by references to the early Fathers of the Church, and by use of such materials as

* Ferreres, p. 103, No. 195.

have been referred to in the Introduction to this small work.

Frequently.—It would be arbitrary to pretend to define *how* often the desired exhortations should be made to the people. At the same time, it must be fairly plain that the mind of the Decree would not be carried out by confining such discourses to the public Triduum of Devotions, to be held annually during the octave of Corpus Christi, or at some other time. The Triduum itself would suffer greatly from such a niggardly policy during the rest of the year.

The word “frequently” manifestly requires something more generous than this. Far more constant insistence on the point will be required for seconding the aim of Pius X.—the removal of long-standing prejudices of a quasi-reverential sort, and abolition of that false economy of the Bread of Life traced by authority to Jansenism, and fostered by the teaching of many rigoristic theological and ascetical writers.

Courses of practical, *simple instructions*, rather than of set sermons, might usefully be started on the lines just now suggested. The interest and attention with which an average congregation listens to plainer discourses of the kind is usually far greater than in the case of sermons properly so-called. Indeed, the capacity shown by many for practical instruction, when presented in an agreeable form, appears to be unlimited. Should special circumstances, however, suggest to the

priest the advisability of starting things by first inoculating a guild or confraternity with the holy plague of Pius X., as an antidote to the *lues Janseniana*, he might begin the work of instruction at their private meetings. From these centres the pious infection would spread to families, and gradually to the whole congregation.

With Great Zeal.—The faithful will be prone to attach little weight to Papal pronouncements on the subject of Communion unless the priest make much of them, and give proof of his esteem by the zeal with which he strives to give effect to them. Again, zeal will not ring true to his hearers unless it be of the sort that willingly embraces the little sacrifices of personal convenience involved in giving the practical facilities for daily Communion, already alluded to in previous sections.*

A large amount of *vis inertiae* and stolidity on the part of the flock may have to be overcome, and this is an obstacle which will not yield to any half-hearted advocacy of the practice in question. Few things demand more patient perseverance than the task of getting people out of the time-honoured rut along which their spiritual life has been accustomed to jolt.

“What was good enough for my sires and grandsires is good enough for me,” is an argument we often hear alleged by non-Catholics against conversion to the Faith.

We may answer that, if their British ancestors

* Pp. 35 and 47.

went about in blankets and paint and worshipped Wodin, that is no reason why they should. So, too, we sometimes hear people urge the same sort of reasoning against any attempt to raise their spiritual standard.

No small amount of zealous persistence will be needed in order to uproot such prejudices. Only by insisting, "in season and out of season," and with all earnestness, can we hope to gain our point.

The Training of Penitents in Daily Communion.

It may be well to put together some points for the training of penitents in the practice of daily Communion. The training process will have to begin with giving them correct ideas concerning the use of the *Sacrament of Penance*.

1. The place of Confession in the spiritual life is essentially that of a remedy in case of need. For although this Sacrament has, as a *secondary* effect, what the Eucharist has for its primary one—viz., the increase of sanctifying grace—yet its main purpose is to restore the state of grace by remitting mortal sin. It is, as the Council of Trent solemnly defines, "rightly called a second plank after shipwreck,"* a second chance offered by the Divine Mercy when we have forfeited our baptismal grace by grievous sin.

Hence, Confession is not intended for the everyday support of our spiritual life. That is the special purpose of our "daily Bread"—the

* Session xiv., Canon 2. Denzinger, 790.

Holy Eucharist. From which it follows that Confession never becomes necessary except when definite and clear mortal sin has been committed since the last Absolution received. Constant recurrence, therefore, to the confessional for the 'grace of Absolution' merely, or for the remission of venial sin, is not to be encouraged. If practised at all widely, confessors, however self-sacrificing and assiduous in confessional work, could never cope with it. Compare the quotation from Antoni given above.*

2. There can be no need for a daily communicant to be constantly referring back to the confessor for fresh advice as to *continuing* his communions. Such consultation, even in the first instance, is a free act of virtue, albeit a very laudable one, recommended, as such, by the Decree. It is an act of humility and submission. Yet consideration alike for the confessor and for those waiting at his confessional is an act of charity, and charity is the queen of all the virtues. Article V. seems only to contemplate consultation with the confessor at starting the practice, so that it is left to him to interfere on his own initiative should he judge that one or other of the two *necessary* conditions (Article I.) is clearly falling into neglect.

3. For discouraged penitents, who may feel inclined to abandon daily Communion on account of perceiving no advance in virtue as its result, the following truth may prove useful: If *no other*

* Page 48.

effect result than their maintenance in the state of grace, this is so unspeakable a benefit (one, too, that pious persons may take too much as a matter of course) that it more than amply justifies the practice. This, however, is not to be interpreted in a *limiting* sense, as though, *e.g.*, a person whose spiritual life is on a lower level, and who is struggling still to overcome some form of grievous sin, and at first with partial success, were not wholly right—nay, recommended—to communicate daily. It is, in fact, his one hope (*cf.* Decree—Purpose of Institution).

4. Penitents given to reading spiritual treatises or books may well be warned against such pious (?) exaggerations as the following :

“It is not enough to use Communion frequently: we must use it well.” “How many unfruitful Communions are made!” “. . . the indiscreet zeal of those who think only of multiplying Communions, without seeking to render them better and more fruitful.”

Such quasi-ascetical statements are surely tainted with unsound theology; they torment timorous souls by their ominous vagueness, and mischievously tend to deter the conscientious from daily Communion. Let us reason it out. Either the Communions thus criticized are made with the two necessary and sufficient dispositions (Article I.), or *without* them. If made *without*, the Church reprehends them, and no one talks of recommending people to make them. But if made *with* them—and one should show penitents that they can be, easily—

they are *always* good, *always* profitable, *always* fruitful—*i.e.*, of themselves—and quite apart from our more perfect, or less perfect, spiritual state. As, therefore, they yield fruit, a *multiplication* of them must necessarily *increase* the fruit, and progress of soul inevitably follows. How hard it is to bring home the full significance of *ex opere operato*! The Eucharist has untold efficacy in itself, even as it resides unreceived in our tabernacles—the one Sacrament that exists complete independently of its administration. Those rich and countless graces that flood the souls of the holiest, and make saints out of sinners, are all, all there. If, alas! that Sacrament be given to a soul in grievous sin, its inherent virtue is still there in all its force, though pent up, and unable so much as to touch the sin-stained soul. It enters a soul in grace, though full of venial sin and imperfection. The same wealth of power is still there, and—since no obstacle hinders its operation—it issues forth to nourish and build up that soul against the assaults of the tempter, and brushes away those venial sins. It comes also to the perfect soul, and then it may put forth its full might, but without borrowing one tittle of it from the soul's perfection. Notice that, throughout, the grace-giving power resides in the Sacrament itself, and is in no sense indebted for its force to human goodness. Given that the soul is substantially in God's friendship, and wills to receive the Eucharist, it is not in the power of that soul to prevent the sanctifying result.

To descend now from sublimer thoughts to a

homely illustration : A man in a strait-waistcoat, if he open his throat in the normal way, will receive air into his lungs. He cannot prevent it. But if he throw off the cramping waistcoat, his lungs extend themselves more freely, and he imbibes yet fuller draughts of air—not because he contributes anything to the air, but only because he disposes his organs to receive it more abundantly.

Here is another spiritual scarecrow : “In operations which involve some supernatural merit, Providence wills that we should contribute a certain amount of co-operation.” Most true ; *but*, as said in order to discredit a Communion made simply in the state of grace, and without further spiritual industry on the receiver’s part, it is a mere sophism, though useful as suggesting an important distinction. No one dreams that the Holy Eucharist, or any other Sacrament, works its effect entirely in spite of us, as might some charm or spell. But the *ex opere operato* working of the Eucharist involves no such superstitious absurdity. The Church, so far from overlooking the need of our co-operation with God, tells us precisely in what it should consist. It is twofold : the possession of the state of grace (to be recovered, if lost, by the Sacrament of Penance) and a right intention. Call this, if you like, the minimum of co-operation, though it will not be so slight if much sin has first to be confessed : but co-operation it is, and the maxim propounded is satisfied.

Even now that the Decrees have determined the

whole question, some books published even since its appearance are found to be influenced—no doubt unconsciously—by the old ideas; so that a Catholic still has need to correct his Eucharistic literature by the Decrees, and not the Decrees by the literature.

5. While thus insisting upon the teaching of Article III., in which freedom from grievous sin is declared to be sufficient, it will not do to ignore Article IV., which dwells on the advantages of additional preparation for daily Communion. The confessor will, no doubt, do well to point out the “more abundant” fruits that are thus obtainable. Yet, as Père Lintelo dryly observes, when we are still at the point of inducing our people to take up daily Communion, much sound wisdom is to be found in the scholastic axiom: “Prius est esse quam esse tale” (We need to secure the thing itself first before we can improve it). In the case, too, of those already solidly established in the practice, we must beware lest they take our exhortations to procure better dispositions as a hint that, if they cannot rise to them, they had better drop daily Communion altogether. Needless to say, the confessor on his side has no power to discourage their continuance on the plea that they do not so rise, provided they have the *essential* dispositions.

6. An objection which might trouble a confessor is this: Just as in the case of bodily nourishment, it cannot be good for a soul to pass suddenly from a habit of receiving Communion four times a year, or less, to Communion every day.

But here the usual comparison between our bodily and our spiritual food fails, since the cases are in this point very different. The reason why a person who has for long been living on "slops," or has been starving, will suffer by a sudden transition to very full and copious diet is because the digestive organs are not disposed for such an unusual amount of work. In the case of daily Communion the soul *is* disposed, if it be in the state of grace and have a right intention.

Of course there may be *other* reasons for a more gradual change, as already suggested—namely, the strength of opposition, deeply rooted prejudices, and the like. But supposing our client to be docile, no harm, but, on the contrary, immense good, will accrue from thus making up for time lost.

Parochial Visitation and Frequent Communion.

No doubt a great deal can be done to promote the Papal Decrees while going on parochial rounds. This will be specially the case as regards the *Communion of Children*. One of the chief obstacles that the missionary priest will have to cope with is resistance from a child's parents, even when these be both of them Catholics, and substantially good Catholics. Some parents, indeed, though not exemplary, are glad—as priests have already found—to facilitate the frequent and daily Communion of their offspring, and to encourage them in it, in order that—as they humbly put it—their sons and daughters may turn out better

Christians than they have been themselves. But others will object to their children communicating oftener than they themselves feel disposed to do. Apart, however, from this jealous, "dog-in-the-manger" attitude, the difficulties put in our way by parents would usually be twofold: (1) *Old-fashioned views* of the would-be reverential kind, such as the Papal teaching wishes to be wholly discarded, as contrary to the purpose for which the Holy Eucharist was given to us; (2) *objection to the trouble* of so ordering domestic arrangements as to make it reasonably possible for children to get to Mass and secure their breakfast, without a terrible rush before going to school. This last, of course, applies chiefly to those classes which avail themselves of the elementary schools under Government.

The first of these difficulties can only be met by instruction in the true principles laid down by Rome, whether by word of mouth in conversation, or by means of distributing cheap Catholic literature on the subject.* Persuasion must do its best to remove the second difficulty. It must be fairly recognized, in the case of the struggling, hard-working poor, that practically insuperable hindrances will often occur—*e.g.*, when the mother herself has to go out early to work. Such cases might, perhaps, be met by the charitable offices of such religious as the Little Sisters of the Assumption, who help

* *E.g.*, "Frequent and Daily Communion," C.T.S. Price 1d. "Parents and Frequent Communion of Children," id.; Sands and Co., London and Edinburgh.

in the homes of the poor, where a parish is blessed with their presence. Sometimes the difficulty will be found to be more apparent than real, and to arise from lack of management. As a motive for attending to this point of arrangement, one might appeal to that desire—often strong in otherwise indifferent or “anti-clerical” parents—that their boys and girls, at least, should be kept good and innocent, if only in the interest of family respectability, or of parental comfort in later years.

Parents whose children give trouble, as most children do—as the parents themselves may have done in their day—should be strongly cautioned *against making any allusion to the Communion of their children when scolding or correcting them for some fault—as if reproaching them with the poor result they show for their Sacraments—e.g., “Much good Communion does you!”* This would naturally discourage children from persevering in the salutary practice, and would foster the old and false notion in their minds that habits of venial sin are impediments to frequent and daily Communion. On the contrary, the closer the child keeps to frequent or daily Communion, the better the hope of its correcting the faults complained of, and at times grossly exaggerated.

Of course parents should be shown that they have absolutely no right—since even the priest no longer has any—to check or to forbid Communion on account of “daily stains,” provided there be no clear and, to the child, *conscious mortal sin*, and that the child receives with a right inten-

tion proportioned to its mental capacity—*e.g.*, “to become good,” “to be more like the Child Jesus” “that Our Lord may love me more,” etc. And such right intention is surely quite compatible with giving a good deal of “trouble” at home, particularly if, as so often happens, the “trouble” is largely due to mismanagement, or misunderstanding, or to perpetual “nagging,” and possibly, also, to bad example of parents themselves. Though such provocations are probably more common with less educated parents, they are not by any means confined to them.

In such cases it will be good to speak to parents on the lines of Article III. of the Decree “*Sacra Tridentina Synodus*,” and also to point out that, according to the primary “desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church,” Holy Communion is not intended as “a reward of virtue,” but as a means for obtaining virtue through victory over passions; and hence, obviously, it is not to be forbidden to children by way of punishment for faults, but urged upon them as “Our Lord’s medicine” for the same.

Allusion has already been made further back—under “Priest as Confessor”—to the difficulty that frequent Communion will overload the priest with confessional duty, since it is common in a well-ordered parish to hear school-children in batches at fixed periods—say, once a month. And it might seem that any extensive practice of frequent or daily Communion on the part of children, in a considerable parish, would

involve the hearing of many children every *week*.* But why so? Canon Antoni's notable words, quoted above, apply at least as much to children as to others. The Decree gives no special privilege to adults for receiving daily, in spite of *unconfessed* venial sins, which it does not equally accord to the youngest child that has made its first Communion. In the Answer (September 15, 1906) to doubters about the full application of the original Decree to younger children, we are referred back to Article I. of the latter, where “all the faithful” are declared at liberty to communicate even daily, on the two necessary (and sufficient) conditions there stated; and freedom from *venial* sin is not one of these. And if we compare Article III., the present contention will appear to be established beyond cavil.

If the proverbial “giddiness” of these little ones be urged to their prejudice, one needs to remember that this argument is a double-edged sword. The same thoughtlessness, which diminishes that responsibility in conduct which we expect from adults, at the same time makes it far less likely that children will have committed fully deliberate mortal sin since their last Confession—an improbability greatly increased by the very fact of their communicating frequently in the

* Let us admit, for a moment, that the extra confessional work would run away with some of the time wanted for looking up unsatisfactory adult parishioners. Just as extension of frequent Communion tends to diminish the *need* of Confession, it also tends to raise the tone of the parish and to diminish the number of backsliders.

week or daily. In fact, preservation "from those graver sins to which human frailty is liable" is declared to be one of the primary purposes of Our Lord's Eucharistic institution. Further, in the *body* of the "Answer" just referred to we are told that this objection about "thoughtlessness" should not be pressed: "*nimis urgenda non est.*" Moreover, what was said further back,* about trusting to the working of grace upon the conscience, applies equally to children. They, too, have consciences, and, as a rule, less pachydermatous ones than the rest of us.

* Page 39.

PART II

THE POLICY OF DAILY COMMUNION CONSIDERED

AT first sight it might appear wholly vain and unprofitable, if not an impertinence towards the Holy See or my readers, to enter upon any deliberation concerning the spiritual policy to be followed in promoting the practice of frequent and daily Communion. For has not Rome spoken? And are we not all of us willing to obey? No less than seven Roman pronouncements of various kinds—all insisting on this salutary practice—have been crowded into the space of the last two and a half years, from the prayer indulgenced and issued by Pius X. in February, 1905, “for the Spread of Daily Communion” throughout the Church, down to the supplementary answer about non-fasting Communion for invalids of March 25, 1907. No vestige of doubt can therefore remain in the mind of the priest as to what he has to do, and there is no call for supposing that he will refuse to do it.

That is true. But there is no need to suppose any

dullness of apprehension on the part of my brother priests, and still less any unreadiness to hear the voice of Peter, in order to justify the present consideration. For it is not an indifferent priest who would be most likely to shrink from frankly seconding the Papal desire that all the faithful, whatever their state or condition, spiritual or temporal, provided they be in grace and have a right intention, should, as far as possible, practise frequent or even daily Communion.

No. It is more likely to be the conscientious, reverential, perhaps somewhat timorous priest—one who is deeply impressed alike by the unspeakable holiness of the mysteries he dispenses, and by his own grave responsibility before God for dispensing the same rightly. Yet a right worthy pastor, for all his anxious desire to be thoroughly loyal to the Holy See, may still be haunted in spite of himself by a secret feeling, such as he shrinks from putting into words—namely, that the Decree “*Sacra Tridentina Synodus*” of December, 1905, involves in practice a somewhat reckless experiment with the holiest of all Sacraments. The warning words of the great theologian-poet of the Holy Eucharist may, perhaps, keep sounding in his ear: “*Ecce Panis Angelorum . . . non mittendus canibus!*”

The remaining pages, therefore, of the present brochure will consist of an endeavour to review critically certain spiritual and ascetical misgivings or difficulties which are more likely to present themselves, and—except the writer be

deceived—do actually occur to the minds of earnest priests, and of a further endeavour, also, to show that such difficulties are grounded neither upon received theology nor upon reason—that they are, in truth, fallacies opposed to the greater glory of God, to the desires of the Sacred Heart as interpreted to us by Its Vicar, and to the good of Christian souls committed to our care. It can be no discredit to anyone to suggest that he may be deceived *sub angelo lucis*—under the appearance of good. For that is the only form of illusion that can well mislead those who are themselves thoroughly good.

It is proposed, then, to discuss certain difficulties. The term "difficulties" is used, rather than "objections," designedly. There is a difference between the two in the present matter, just as in matters of faith. To illustrate this: If, for instance, I believe the Church to be infallibly guided in her teaching by "the Spirit of Truth," then I can have no "objection" to make against her doctrine of eternal punishment. For an objection properly so called, unless made academically, implies a doubt or questioning, and hence a certain resistance to the teaching authority. Yet when I come to compare that doctrine with some other truth equally taught by the same unerring authority—say, the Infinite Goodness of God—I may find a genuine "difficulty" in reconciling the two truths, and, moreover, that difficulty may remain unsolved indefinitely without substantial detriment to my

Catholic belief in both truths. Something analogous to this may occur with a priest in the matter of daily Communion. He cannot, as a subordinate director of souls, well have an "objection" to advocating daily Communion for all alike. For the desirability of doing so has been already determined by the supreme spiritual direction of the Church, according to which "*all* the faithful"—young and old, the more spiritually minded as well as the unspiritual, those most given to fully deliberate venial sins or most liable to fall into mortal sin, as well as more innocent consciences—are without distinction to be earnestly exhorted to that practice. The principle, therefore, that this practice is "salutary," as the Holy See calls it, is necessarily accepted with loyal docility. But when a person comes to consider the carrying-out of that principle, in relation to the unspeakable holiness of the Eucharistic Victim, on the one hand, and to the spiritual deficiencies of the average communicant on the other, he finds it difficult to reconcile the urgent exhortations of the Holy See, not merely with the dignity of the Sacrament, but even with a judicious treatment of souls confided to his pastoral care.

In these pages such reasonings against frequent and daily Communion as, "I am not worthy"; "I must get holier first"; "I must be freer from fully deliberate venial sins, must fall less frequently into mortal sin, before venturing to receive daily"—reasonings like these will be entirely passed

over.* For, apart from their belonging rather to the communicant than to the priest, they are in truth "objections," running directly counter to the explicit teaching of the Decree of December, 1905, both where it declares Our Lord's purpose in instituting the Sacrament,† and in Article I., where it lays down the only two necessary qualifications for receiving daily—viz., the state of grace and a right intention. Whence it follows that those more perfect dispositions alluded to, however desirable they be for obtaining *still greater* fruit, are not *necessary* for a worthy, and hence fruitful, daily reception.

We come, therefore, to genuine difficulties, which are of a more abstruse character, since they present themselves in the seductive guise of a more enlightened and refined asceticism.

1. *It is to be feared that an indiscriminate promotion among the faithful of daily Communion will result in a great abuse of grace on the part of the many.*

Let us define our terms. What is meant by "abuse of grace"?

An abuse of grace means not using grace properly when offered or had. Grace is given to me for some spiritual end, but I do not correspond with it duly, and fail to secure that end. I waste the grace of God. Now, the difficulty before us

* Replies to them may be found in "Notes on Daily Communion."

† "Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church," etc.

alleges that, with the many, daily Communion will introduce a great squandering of grace, and that it would be better not to receive these Eucharistic graces than to neglect any of them when received.

The first flaw in this line of reasoning appears to be that it proves too much. How far is it to be carried? Ought one, for example, to tell a person: "You had better not pray so much, because you will probably not make good use of the graces received through frequent prayer"? Arguments from abuse are proverbially weak. Again, is there any solid reason, on the ground of possible abuse of grace, for being more chary of *daily* Communion than of *monthly* or *yearly* Communion? For ascetics assure us that Holy Communion contains such rich possibilities of holiness that one single reception would suffice to make a saint of the communicant. Yet how many souls have, as a fact, been made perfect by a single Communion? Has any soul ever been, even among canonized saints. Clearly, then, since "Sacraments are for men"—for men as they are and as Christ knew them to be, for men full of weakness and inconstancy—there will always be, and Our Lord, in instituting the Eucharist, must have contemplated the sad certainty that there always would be, a considerable wastage of Eucharistic, as of other graces. Complete fidelity to grace received at every period of the soul's supernatural development is a perfection usually attributed to Mary alone of all creatures—Mary

ever full of grace according to her capacity, at any given stage of her life. It seems to be part of God's unbounded generosity, of His immense fatherly indulgence and wonderful patience towards His prodigal children, that He continues to heap His favours upon them without stint, though He knows for certain that a large percentage will be wasted.

But to go somewhat deeper. If the dread of grace being abused is to stand between us and a fearless following of the guidance given us by the Holy See, then surely abuse of grace must be very sinful. Is it necessarily so? Not always. Hence it is not invariably matter for Confession. Indeed, as a separate defect, its abuse is not a point of definite self-accusation at all, for it does not in itself form a distinct species of fault. It is rather an explanation of the process by which the fault came to be committed. Seeing that it consists in not securing the spiritual purpose for which the grace was given, its guilt will depend upon the moral significance of my particular failure to secure it—upon the degree of my moral obligation to obtain it. Thus, if the grace be given me to resist a temptation to mortal sin, abuse of that grace is not morally distinguishable from the mortal sin into which I fall. Similarly, abuse of grace given to avoid *venial* sin, or to practise some counsel of perfection, is part and parcel of the venial sin committed, or of the imperfection. And imperfection, at least, is not sin.

These notions being premised, the question before us is: Will there be more abuse of grace in proportion as we multiply Communion? Or, in other words, will more mortal sin, venial sin, and imperfection, result therefrom? The Holy See evidently judges that there will *not* be, for in its Decree it states the purpose for which Christ gave us the Eucharist as threefold—(1) to enable us to resist our passions; (2) to cleanse us from our daily (venial) faults; (3) to preserve us from those graver (*i.e.*, mortal) sins to which human frailty is liable. Or, to put it in another but equivalent form: (1) to enable us to *correspond* with grace, and not to yield to our passions; (2) to cleanse us from *venial* abuses of grace; and (3) to preserve us from that graver form of abuse, mortal sin, which results in our forfeiting the state of grace altogether. The purpose of the Sacred Heart may therefore be summed up in one word—our preservation from abuse of grace in all its forms. Is it reasonable, then, not to say reverent, that we should entertain fears lest a sacramental instrument, fashioned by Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Love, expressly for a definite purpose, should on the whole fail to secure it just *in proportion as we use that instrument more frequently*? The man who maintains the difficulty now occupying our attention must explain so glaring a paradox as best he may.

2. Another difficulty, also of an ascetical nature, comes up for consideration. It is feared that great frequency in receiving will produce a *diminu-*

tion of fervour in our Communions. Experience confirms this dread. People, it is alleged, often experience greater devotion when they receive once a month than when they communicate every week, or several times a week. Fervour of devotion is found to wear off owing to the frequency.

To this one may reply in short: Granting the alleged experience to be very probable, the suggested inference, that *therefore* less frequent Communion is to be preferred, must be emphatically denied. But to deal with this point more thoroughly.

If by "fervour," "devotion," etc., is meant a *sensible feeling* of fervour, of devotion, it may readily be admitted that such stirrings of the emotions are very likely to decrease in proportion as Communions become more frequent—at all events, in the case of many communicants; not, however, in the sense that "familiarity breeds contempt." Such cooling of sensible fervour does not necessarily argue any diminution of our *mental* and *spiritual* appreciation of the Sacrament, nor necessarily carry with it a falling off in earnestness of *will* and *intention* in our preparation, reception, and thanksgiving. It is only that the *feelings* are less powerfully aroused by that which is of customary, daily occurrence. The radical error which seems to underlie this kind of difficulty is a wrong notion as to the essential meaning of fervour and devotion.

Devotion is not at root or in substance a question of "feelings." S. Thomas Aquinas defines

it as "readiness of the *will* in things relating to the service of God." This exorbitant valuation of devout feelings, which is only too common, introduces a mischievous subjectivity into our spiritual life, which ought rather to be guided by objective principles. The error is far-reaching, and apt to throw our spirituality into confusion all down the line; for it tends to discourage us from persevering in the constant use of prayer—that is to say, when our feelings are "dry"—to handicap us in our daily struggle against our temper, resentments, uncharitableness, pride, sensuality, when our "feelings" run strongly counter to the opposing virtues, and we experience no virtuous inclination at all, but quite the reverse. The answer given by an old and saintly confessor to a dying fellow-priest, who wished to defer the Last Sacraments for a day, in order, as he pleaded, to receive them with greater devotion, is much to our present point: "Father, receive them with faith; never mind about the devotion." The invalid did not live to see another day.

It seems necessary, "in season and out of season," to keep insisting upon the unanimous teaching of Catholic theology concerning the *modus operandi* of Christ's marvellous Sacraments. They have their causal efficacy, of giving or increasing grace, not in virtue of pious dispositions, however desirable these may be, but *ex opere operato*—*i.e.*, of their own inherent force, derived from Him who made them. Their effects are inevitably infallible, unless we refuse that modi-

cum of free co-operation which is necessary for removing any essential obstacle (or *obex*) to their working, which, in the case of the Eucharist, is *mortal sin*, and mortal sin *alone*.

The rich, grace-giving virtue inherent in the Eucharist itself is absolutely certain: there is no indefiniteness at all about it; whereas that additional amount of fruit, accruing to us from our personal fervour and more perfect dispositions, is somewhat vague and difficult to gauge. In fact, devout feelings of the sort are quite compatible with a far lower intensity of fervour in the *will* than may exist in a communicant who *feels nothing* when receiving.

Yet, after all, it is devotion of the *will*—that determination of the mind and resolute intention to worship and serve God, that serious spiritual *desire* to get closer to Our Lord—however devoid of feeling—which counts most in the Divine sight, and constitutes the very essence and substance of true devotion. Devout feelings are but an accidental part of the same. They may come, or they may go, as God shall please; but the strong current of our will and “meaning” should flow on towards the Infinite Ocean for ever.

We might put this matter in another shape. Either devotion of the feelings is a virtue—a point of goodness—or it is but a heavenly boon vouchsafed to us at times for our solace and encouragement. (We may skip the further alternative—a natural poetic sentiment.) If it be a virtue, then, like all other virtues, it will be greatly fostered by

a free use of Holy Communion. But if it be rather—as, indeed, it is—a comfort, then the loss of it—supposed by the present difficulty to follow from daily Communion—can have no bearing whatever upon our attitude towards that salutary practice. Ought not one rather to say that its forfeiture, in exchange for the very substantial and infallible increase of grace produced in the soul by constant Communion, must be judged a highly profitable spiritual bargain?

What, however, it may be asked, if the cooling of sensible fervour or accidental devotion should react upon the will, and, owing to human weakness, lead to some falling off in that will-fervour which has been represented above as constituting the substance of true devotion, and bring in some avoidable carelessness in preparation and thanksgiving?

Even so, the loss suffered must, one would think, be trifling compared to the rich fruits to be infallibly derived from the presence in the soul of the Divine Source of grace, provided only He be received in the state of grace. Though the quality of Communions may possibly be somewhat inferior, their quantity will make up for it. No astonishment need be felt at this seemingly selfish way of treating the subject. The dignity of Christ, the safeguarding of the honour and reverence due to Him, is declared by the Holy See *not* to be the first consideration, since He Himself, whether in His Incarnation, His Passion, or in the Sacramental memorial of that Passion, forgot Himself

in order to minister to our needs. “*Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem,*” says the Creed; “*Sacramenta propter homines,*” faithfully echo the theologians; “*Divinum pharmacum,*” re-echoes Pius X. It is this truth which forms the very basis upon which Rome’s advocacy of daily Communion may be said to rest. There is hardly any difficulty that can be advanced to which that cardinal truth is not found to supply the all-sufficient answer.

3. A further difficulty, which has been already treated elsewhere,* may be usefully considered in this place in greater detail.

Many of those whom one might persuade to communicate daily will, from one cause or another, probably, or certainly, not maintain this frequency later on, or in altered circumstances. This is a difficulty applying chiefly, perhaps, to the young who, while at school, or when gathered together in guilds and confraternities, etc., are more directly and constantly under priestly supervision. It is expected that these, when grown up or transplanted to other places, will fall off, either because their new conditions of life will not admit of frequent Communion, or because their zeal for it will become relaxed. Consequently, it is thought, persons of the kind should not be urged to receive very frequently while they can.

It is difficult to speak respectfully of such reasoning. So many Communion made by those in

* “Notes on Daily Communion.”

grace, so many additions to their store of grace against the time of famine, are manifestly so much clear gain for ever, whether the gain be maintained or not. Moreover, in those cases—and they may well be numerous—in which the falling off is not voluntary, but rendered unavoidable, or at least excusable, by circumstances, there is a good hope, surely, that, when conditions become favourable again, the old habit of frequent Communion will reassert itself. At least, such souls will not be *less* eucharistically disposed on account of their former habit of frequent reception.

If, to use an illustration, I have an opportunity to-day of turning over two hundred pounds, then the consideration that to-morrow I shall only obtain a profit of two pounds affords no intelligible reason for missing the present opportunity. *Carpe diem et horam*. It is a case of “making hay while the sun shines.”

But the difficulty is capable of being put somewhat more plausibly. A priest-in-charge may say: “So many of those whom I would fain urge to daily Communion will certainly be prevented, in a few short years, from continuing the practice. Is it not wiser, therefore, for me to ground them now thoroughly in a degree of frequency (in the popular sense) such as there is a fair prospect of most of them being able to maintain afterwards? The present gain of daily Communion I do not—nay, cannot—deny; but what I fear is that, since its present habit must be dropped in the future, there will be no fixed habit to take its place, and

it may end in the abandonment of Holy Communion altogether—except, possibly, at Easter.

An obvious preliminary answer suggests itself. The Holy See, with its experience of men gathered during the space of some nineteen centuries, and with its abundant sources of information as to the state of dioceses, is presumably not so ignorant of the conditions of daily life as to be unaware of the hundred and one obstacles that may supervene preventing many, who had begun to practise daily Communion, from keeping it up. Yet, in spite of this truism, our Supreme Spiritual Guide deliberately exhorts "parish priests, preachers, and confessors to exhort *all* the faithful" to frequent and daily Communion, "frequently and with much zeal."

That people carefully trained in youth to the excellent rule of monthly Communion may bid fair to persevere in the same under most of the ordinary conditions of life need not be questioned. But what ground is there for concluding that those who have acquired early the habit of much *greater* frequency will not communicate at least monthly afterwards, supposing more to be impossible?

To recur to an old comparison, by aiming high above the target while occasion offers, a person is less likely, and not more likely, to fall below the bull's-eye of monthly Communion. Early impressions are generally reputed to be the strongest. The mere memory of that former frequency is quite as likely to act as an incentive to availing oneself of such opportunities as occur, and not as a restraining influence, keeping

one down to the wooden level of only one Communion in the month. For fear of misunderstanding, let it be stated most emphatically that there is no intention here of depreciating the *immense* value of regular monthly Communions, such as membership with guilds and other pious corporations tends so efficiently to foster. Little doubt can be entertained by those who have had any experience of missionary life that these monthly Communions preserve unspotted from this world many a soul that is constantly living in the midst of unbelieving and corrupt surroundings, which would otherwise be ruined. The point here pressed is simply this: that earnest promotion of frequent and daily Communion—according to the tenor of the Roman Decrees—is the last thing that will weaken the observance of so good and practical a rule afterwards; that, on the contrary, it will lead people, not only to keep it, but, when the chance offers, to greatly exceed it.

4. While incidentally referring to guilds and the like, it seems natural to touch upon another difficulty sometimes entertained by zealous missionary priests against a certain practice in honour of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord—one strongly recommended both by Leo XIII. and Pius X.—namely, the “First Friday” devotion, with its Communion of reparation. One hears it urged, chiefly by those who have never tried the experiment, that while working people up to communicate on the first Friday of the month you will diminish proportionately the muster at the Communion-

rails on the Sunday; that, in consequence, those members of a congregation who, owing to their daily occupations and duties, are unable to approach the Sacraments except on Sundays, are thus deprived of the moral support and encouragement which is to be derived from the sight of a goodly gathering of communicants on the Sunday. Or, to present the case in a slightly different form: the previous establishment in a parish of some guild or confraternity, the members of which communicate in a body on some fixed Sunday in the month, is considered a valid reason for excluding an association like the Apostleship of Prayer, with its usual, desirable, but not obligatory, observance of the "First Friday" Communion. It is alleged that those who communicate on the Friday as members of the Apostleship will absent themselves from their monthly Sunday Communion, expected from them as members of the said guild. And thus the main object of such guilds—namely, to secure at least monthly Sacraments in common—will be greatly imperilled.

Now, anyone who has had moderate experience in this matter might safely challenge the objector to make a trial, and feel quite confident that no such evil results would follow, or, if it did, that the real cause would be found to be a different one. Those who have personally seen how such things work out in practice will probably be ready to give fairly unanimous testimony, along with the present writer, to the truth that, usually speaking, the more people communicate, the more they want

to; and that, in point of fact, a little careful observation will prove that it is not those members of a guild who practise the "First Friday," in connexion with the Apostleship, who commonly prove defaulters on guild Communion mornings. And this is still less likely to happen if the Sunday chosen be the one nearest to the first Friday in the month—*i.e.*, the First Sunday.

It is a case of "qui Te edunt adhuc esurient, qui Te bibunt adhuc sitient." Feeding upon the Body and Blood of Our Lord in the Eucharist does not produce satiety, but rather hunger and thirst for more. Those who feel this difficulty would appear to be not so much victims of a short-sighted policy as distrustful of the attractive power of the Sacred Heart inherent in Its Sacrament of Love. The promise, "Omnia traham ad meipsum"—"I will draw all things to Myself"—is just as true of the Victim of the Eucharist as of the Victim raised upon the Cross.

A sincere endeavour has been made to grapple fairly with certain possible misgivings about the advocacy of frequent and daily Communion. But when all is said and done, the best solution of all difficulties lies in the saying that "Prudence is the virtue of him who commands, not of him who obeys." In the present case, it is true, we have no command, but—what will be practically equivalent to every loyal child of the Church—an urgent and reiterated exhortation of the Holy See. Is it not far simpler to rely upon the prudence of the Church, specially guided by the

Spirit of God? The responsibility is hers, not ours. We are not the masters and proprietors of the Divine mysteries, but only the dispensers. Whither shall we go for sure counsel in our responsible ministry except to the earthly fountain-head of spiritual jurisdiction?

NOTE

THE PRIESTS' EUCHARISTIC LEAGUE (LEGA SACERDOTALE EUCHARISTICA)

THIS League was erected in Rome at the Church of Santo Claudio 'de Urbe,' July 27, 1906, by the authority of the then Vicar of Rome, Cardinal Respighi.

All—and so far only—priests are eligible for membership.

The *end* which the League proposes to its members—as provided in its Statutes—is 'to spread the practice of Frequent and Daily Communion' in accordance with the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, 'Sacra Tridentina Synodus,' of December 20, 1905.

The *means* prescribed to the leaguers for promoting the aforesaid end are: *prayer, speaking* and *press work*, and the *diffusion of literature* relating to the subject. These are the sole duties required of members, and, presumably, not all of them are demanded of each.

Amongst the *privileges* granted by the Holy See to the members of the League, the two following are the more notable ones:

1. The privilege, attached to the *person* of the priest-

leaguer, of a 'Privileged Altar,' which can be used *thrice in the week*—'servatis servandis.'

2. The faculty of communicating a *Plenary Indulgence once a week* to penitents who practise Daily Communion. According to a decision of the Congregation of Indulgences, May 7, 1907, it is not necessary that the grant should be made to the penitent week by week, but it may be imparted for several weeks by a single declaration. Further, arguing from the terms of the Decree of February 14, 1906, releasing Daily Communicants from the necessity of weekly confession as a condition for gaining Plenary Indulgences, '*even though they miss Communion once or twice in the week,*' it would seem that the penitent, in the present case also, would still benefit by the Confessor's grant in spite of such occasional omission of Communion.

Application for diploma and booklet of Statutes, accompanied by a remittance of 2½d. for postage, etc., is to be made to:

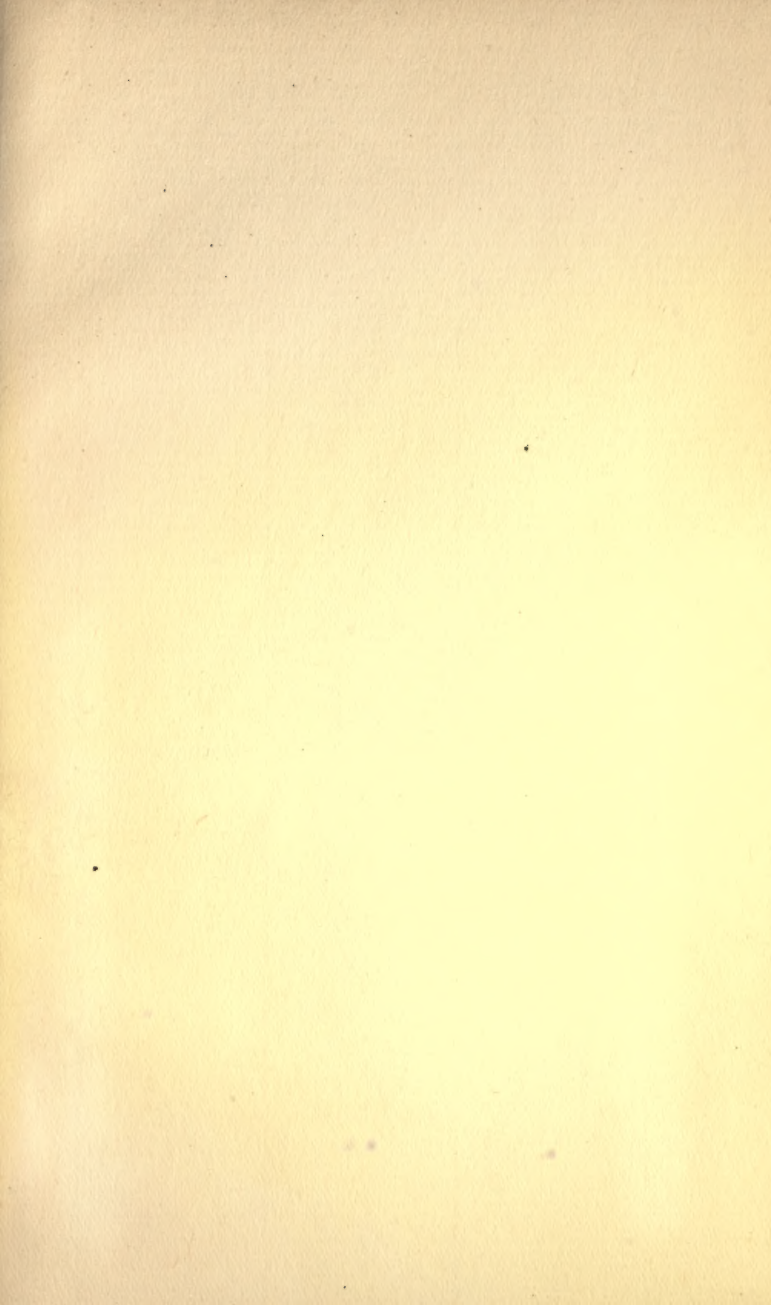
MODERATORE GENERALE DELLA LEGA,
160, Via del Pozzetto,
Roma.

N.B.—This 'Priests' League' is a different organization from one of a kindred aim established in the United States, which is sometimes called by a similar title, but would be more accurately styled, 'The Priest Adorers' (*Les Prêtres Adorateurs*). Both associations, however, are connected with the 'Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament,' but their duties and privileges differ. Early in the year 1907 the League already numbered about 9,000 priests.

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